

THE FIVE CENT

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The Gallant Middy;

OR,

Captured by Pirates.

By RICHARD R. MONTGOMERY.

Author of "Conrado, the Corsair," "The Black Flag," "Nunez, the Fire Queen,"
"Ben Brandt," Etc. Etc.

CHAPTER I.

LIONEL DASHWOOD, the hero of our story, was a favorite pupil of one Dr. Daverant, a clergyman of limited means, who kept a private school in a small town some ten miles from Boston.

Lionel, or Lal, as he was familiarly called, was the only child of a captain in the royal navy, who, with his ship, had some ten years before the opening of our tale, been lost off the coast of the great island of Madagascar.

His mother, Mrs. Dashwood, had married a second time with a Boston merchant.

Let us add, that under Captain Dashwood's will, his widow was left a considerable income, which, in case of Lal's death before her own, was to be at her absolute control and disposal.

Thus Alderman Opium, a hard, grasping man, regarded our hero, his step-son, with no great pleasure, feeling that he stood between himself and a fortune.

One bright and glorious summer's evening Lal might have been seen leaving the academy of Dr. Daverant, and making his way with his head bent forward, as if impatient to meet some person with whom he had an appointment.

Almost forcing his way through a thickly planted maze of shrubbery, he came to a summer house, so tastefully decorated with roses and honeysuckles, it required no stretch of the imagination to liken it to a fairy bower.

At all events, something like a fairy was sitting within, in the shape of a girl some seventeen years of age.

So intent was the girl with a letter that she observed not our hero, who, with eyes flashing with delight, stood within a yard from where she was sitting.

"Olive, dear Olive," said Lal, how can I thank you for granting me this meeting? But pardon me; the contents of the letter you are reading seem to give you no great pleasure—nay, pain you. I hope you have received no bad news?"

"Well, Lal, not good; it is from my father, Sir Leofric Mordaunt. But you, too, received a letter this morning which did not seem to please you—that is, if I may judge from your frowning."

"Please me!" replied Lal, "I should think not! It was from my step-father, Alderman Opium. What do you think—he actually orders me to return to Boston, and take a seat in his office as clerk."

"Well, Lal," replied Olive, coolly, "why not?"

"I sit in a musty old office poring over a lot of musty, dirty books! I'll see him in Jericho first! My father was a brave officer and a gentleman, and I will follow his profession, and not this musty, fusty old alderman's. The only thing that makes me dislike going to sea is leaving you, dear Olive. For don't you remember that years ago you promised to be my wife when you were old enough, and you know you are not far off that time now."

"That's true, dear Lal, but we were too young then to judge for ourselves. I am now the promised wife of another; my father has promised, and I know him too well to believe he will ever break his word."

"Tut—tut!" returned Lal, "that may be all very well now; but in four years you will be of age, and can do as you like, and by that time I shall have made a fortune in the Spanish Main."

"The Spanish Main?" she returned. "Shocking, Lal, shocking! Surely you would not become a pirate?"

"Pirate?" returned Lal. "why, there's that precious step-father of mine—I should like to know how he got his money, if not by his

ships. But tell me, Olive, who is the man to whom your father has promised your hand?"

"Captain Darlington—a man of good birth, and one of the wealthiest men in the country."

"Ah!" said Lal, bitterly, "and it is you who are talking of pirates! Why, I have heard my step-father say that he made all his wealth by buccaneering!"

"But, dear Lal, why not go and see your mother and step-father, and endeavor by affection to persuade them to let you join the navy if you wish, but in an honorable capacity."

At this moment their conversation was interrupted by the barking of a dog outside the summer house, and by the abrupt entrance of a young negro, in evident alarm.

"Hello, Ju! Is that you?" said Lal.

"Not Ju," replied the black; "me Julius Cesar."

Julius was a favorite slave of Lal's mother, and devoted alike to mother and son; thus Lal was not a little surprised at seeing him there.

"Why, what in the name of all that's gracious brings you here, Ju? Nothing the matter with my mother, I hope?"

"No," replied Ju, "nothing matter Missee Opium, but Massa Opium he not well."

"Why, what's the matter with him?"

"Oh, him not ill, but bad at heart. He want to get Massa Lal home, den ship him off to plantation, so get him away when moder dead."

"I cannot believe anything so wicked, so horrible!" said Olive.

"It's all true; for I tink someting wrong when I see rascal buccaneer captain always wid massa, so I hide in cask in little store room, and hear all dey say. Massa Opium offer rascal buccaneer plenty money if he catch Massa Lal on road to Boston, and den put him on board his ship. Den I say to myself: 'Dem two dam rascals?' and I go at once and tell lady who has been like a moder to me."

"Ah!" exclaimed Lal, "what did she say to that precious scheme?"

"She only look serious, but say nothing; den she write a letter for you, Massa Lal, and tell me to run all the way, ride, or anything, so I could get to you quick."

Impatiently Lal broke the seal. It was to the following effect:

"MY DEAR SON.—Mr. Opium, I hear, has written to you requesting you to return to Boston to take a seat in his counting-house. Once I rejoiced at the notion, as we would always be near each other. Not long since, however, I had reason to doubt whether it would be safe either for you or myself. Still more recently my suspicions were confirmed. Thus I earnestly entreat you, without mentioning to Dr. Daverant whither you are proceeding, go to my brother—your uncle at Devonport, and there remain until you hear from me."

"Now what say you, Olive?" said Lal.

"That it is a most wicked plot for your ruin, and that your mother has acted wisely in giving you advice."

"I should think she had; and I shall act upon it by quitting the doctor to-morrow. And now, dear Olive, as I may not have another opportunity, give me that garnet ring you have on your finger, and I will give you this old, rare-set opal."

It was an opal in the coils of a snake, the eyes of the reptile being small diamonds.

"Really, Lal, a good exchange; they will remind us of each other in after years."

At this moment Dr. Daverant was seen coming from the door of the house, and seeing the young couple together, frowned angrily.

"Well—well," he said, "after my express desire, this meeting in the grounds is unkind, ungrateful on your part, Miss Mordaunt. As for you, Mr. Dashwood, it is dishonorable, knowing as you do that she is the fiancée of another. Nay, but for the letter from your father, who desires that you return to Boston to-morrow, I should feel inclined to expel you from my house."

"It is for that reason, my dear doctor," replied Lal, "that we have both ventured to disobey your orders. You know that Olive and I are old friends, and may never meet again."

"Well—well," replied the doctor, with affected impatience, "come along, both of you. The dinner-bell has rung once, and as it is a farewell banquet to Mr. Dashwood, we must not spoil it by our tardiness."

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning, Lal and Julius Cesar started from the residence of Dr. Daverant, and shortly afterwards reached the roadside inn at which the coach called.

While waiting in the public room, Lal's attention was attracted by the sudden entrance of a person who is destined to play a prominent part in our story.

Tall, nay, almost of gigantic stature, of proportionate bulk, raven-black hair and beard, high, broad forehead, large features of the Roman cast; he would have been a remarkably handsome man but for the curl of the lip and sinister expression of the eyes, which bespoke a habit of continual sneering, and the thick lips and heavy jowl, which bespoke sensuality.

But what most attracted the attention of our adventurously-inclined hero, was his collar, which was that of a naval officer of the period.

Without the least hesitation, the new-comer entered into conversation with our hero, without the formality of an introduction. He soon succeeded in drawing from Lal a portion of his sea-going aspirations, and also that his father had served in the same honorable calling as himself.

"So—so. Then your father was a seaman, was he?"

"He was an officer, a captain of a king's ship, sir," replied the lad, proudly.

"And you would doubtless like to follow in his footsteps?"

"Nay, I said not so," replied Lal.

"I cannot believe it. Few young men of your build, and I can see, spirit, would refuse the opportunity, if it were a good one that was offered."

"But however much I might like to go to sea I cannot, for I am not my own master," replied our hero.

"Indeed," replied the officer, with his usual sneer; "then, at your age, who is?"

"My mother, at present," answered Lal, boldly, for there was more real courage in that reply than if he had refused to acknowledge his mother's supremacy.

"Your mother!" sneered the officer; "pooh—pooh! at your age I was my own master, chose the sea, went two voyages, and in as many years made a fortune, and still, albeit I am rich, I stick to the sea."

A fortune in two years!

How hard Lal looked at such an extraordinary personage; for had not Olive laughed at him when he told her of his dream of making a fortune in four years?

Thus excited, forgetting his caution, he said, interrogatively:

"You, then, have been a buccaneer?"

"Ay, lad, and sailed with Morgan; nay, commanded one of his ships, and many were the gold and silver-laden Spanish galleons we took and divided among us. I was, too, at the glorious siege of Panama."

"Indeed," replied Lal, who now began to hate, if not fear, the man; "that was all piracy, and Morgan was a great villain."

"Pooh—pooh, lad! What is called piracy now by the Dutch King William was, in the days of which I speak, looked upon as glorious; for it was only the ships of the Spaniards, and they were our natural enemies. The Spanish Armada, and its purpose of making England a Spanish colony, is not even yet forgotten."

"And you are a buccaneer still, I suppose?"

"Not so. I am a king's officer—nay, am here even now on a particular duty."

"I am glad to hear *that*, at all events," replied Lal; "for whatever buccaneers were in the days gone by, now, I know, when taken by the king's officers they are hanged as pirates."

"Ay—ay, perhaps so, my lad; but many a man does a strange thing he has no intention of doing, and joins a noble profession without intending it."

There was the sneer again, but as well, a look of satisfaction and triumph.

Lal felt an uncomfortable feeling of insecurity, and placed his hand on the pistol within his coat pocket.

The lynx eyes of this man detected the movement, and guessing its meaning, pulled forth a pair of silver-mounted pistols, said, as he pointed one at each:

"Look you, my lad, I made you a fair offer and you refused it. I told you I was on duty. Now that duty was to secure men and likely lads for his majesty's ships. Don't attempt to fire, for you will miss, and I am a dead shot. Moreover, you could not escape, for my men surround the house, and have their eyes on you now."

"Villain!" cried the impetuous lad, and he fired.

The bullet, passing the officer, found its billet in the wainscoting beyond.

The next instant some half-a-dozen sailors, with pistols and cutlasses, secured both Lal and Ju.

"In the king's name," said the officer, "I press you to serve on board his majesty's ship, *Sea Dragon*."

"Villain—coward!" cried Lal. "Seven to two. You're armed, we're not. A precious specimen of British pluck, truly!"

Away with the mutinous fool! Handcuff him and clap a gag in his mouth. As for the black, he'll do for the cuddy, and afterwards to sell on the plantation."

Thus handcuffed and closely guarded, they were led down to the quay, where they found the *Sea Dragon's* boat waiting, with several men who, like themselves, had been pressed by the brutal lieutenant.

"Gag that boy and nigger if they give us another word of their jaw," cried the lieutenant.

The hint was enough.

Not another word was spoken till they reached the *Sea Dragon*.

If Lal had any doubt as to his prospects of comfort while afloat with the lieutenant, it was removed the moment the boat grated against the ship's side, for unlocking the handcuffs, he said, as savagely as before:

"Now then, youngster, up the gangway; smart, too, or by — you'll find yourself propelled from behind; and you too, Devilskin, up with you."

"Ugh! you brute, you shall answer for this hereafter, and maybe sooner than you expect!" cried the exasperated Lal, as he obeyed.

"Golly, yes he shall," added Ju, as they stood upon the deck.

"So—so," returned the lieutenant, who was immediately at their heels, "you've commenced mutiny early, my lad. I'll teach you obedience. You're a smart colt and must be broken at once. Jones," added the brute to the boatswain, "clap this gentleman in the bilboes for a couple of hours. A bucket of water, too, will help to cool him."

The boatswain and his mate were about to obey the order, but Lal at once, silly as it was among so many, began to show fight.

"Hands off!" he cried. "I don't admit your authority, and if I did, I've committed no crime, and will not willingly be punished like a thief!"

"By —!" returned the lieutenant, overcome with rage, "this is too good! Look you, youngster, I'll treat you like a naughty boy."

And as he spoke, snatching a rattan from the ship's corporal, he struck him across the face.

"By Heaven! I'll give you better than you sent, rascal, if I'm hanged for it!" cried Lal.

One blow straight from the shoulder, the lieutenant staggered backwards, and stumbling against a coil of rope, was upon his back.

"Golly, dat one for him," cried Ju, grinning.

The effect of this scene upon the crew was different.

One portion of those near stood silent and motionless; indeed, showing by their countenances they rather admired the pluck, while the others seized both Lal and Ju.

"Hilloa—hilloa! what's in the wind now?" cried a good-natured, jolly-looking stout man in undress uniform.

"Muntiny, by thunder, Captain Grigg, and set on foot by this young scamp who was only pressed to-day!" replied the lieutenant, adding, "he struck me a violent blow. It is death by the articles—death, Captain Grigg. I'll have him put in irons at once."

"Well—well, never mind," said the good-natured captain, "look over it this time to oblige me. We were boys once, and might have done the same thing."

"Golly, dat good; s'pose you'd been cuffed and kicked you'd done same ting, capen," said Ju.

"Who is this black fellow?" cried the captain, with a look of astonishment at the negro's presumption.

"A nigger pressed at the same time," replied the lieutenant.

"I Julius Caesar, slave of Missee Opium, and servant of Massa Lal here, Missee Opium's son."

"Is it possible?" cried the captain.

"It is, sir," replied our hero, "and this lieutenant promised me, if I went to sea in his ship, I should be made an officer."

"And by the beard of old Neptune, you shall, if you behave yourself, for I knew your father! But we must have no more striking superior officers. Now come to my cabin."

"By Jove, this is jolly!" cried a young midshipman, coming up to Lal. "I am the only midshipman on board; another is wanted. You are a gentleman, and will do; for I know my father, Captain Grigg, will order you on the quarterdeck."

And so saying, he followed Lal into the cabin.

"I shall not soon forget your kindness, captain," said Lal, addressing his commander as he entered the cabin.

"Tut—tut! it is for your father's sake—my old shipmate—not yours. Now what say you, my lad, to a glass of grog, for you are one of my young gentlemen now, and may have one with me—nay, two if you like."

"Jack," he added, to his son, "get the rum decanter."

"Now—now, father, please," replied Jack, coaxingly. "Pardon me, but you have already had more than is good for you."

"Pardon me, Captain Grigg," put in Lal, "I never touch strong waters."

"Nonsense, lad—nonsense! you'll soon get used to them."

"I hope not, sir—"

But Jack gave him a wink, and having dealt out three glasses of well-watered rum, the captain drank to the health of Lal's mother and success in life to her son.

"It's a sad pity," said Jack to Lal, with a sigh as they again appeared together on deck.

"What's a sad pity?"

"Why, that he should be so much given to his bottle, for he is a glorious fellow otherwise, and as brave as a lion. But now do you know where we are bound for?"

"No; how should I?"

"Well, then, to Corunna to get our orders from the don, and after that, Heaven knows where."

CHAPTER III.

THE entrance of our hero upon his forced career was unpromising enough.

Yet fortune soon began to smile upon him.

How long the sunshine lasted we shall speedily see.

It was strange, almost an impossibility, for such a nature as that of Lieutenant Raffle to change from bad to good, because he was of a vindictive nature, and vindictive people are the same to the end.

Yet so it appeared; for they had not been at sea two days before the lieutenant, upon every possible occasion, sought Lal's society; nay, was even kind to Julius Caesar, and when asked bluntly the reason, his reply was his admiration of the lad's pluck, and his desire to keep on good terms with the captain.

After a quick run they reached Corunna, and anchored in the bay; there, as we have before said, to await orders.

They had been at anchor about a week.

During that time the good-natured Captain Grigg had given both men and officers, by turn, ample liberty leave ashore, not forgetting to take a fair share for himself.

Of course, among the rest, both Lal and Jack had taken their turn; but as there were only two middies on board, and the ship could not be left without one of them at any single time, they had not been able to enjoy the shore-going fun in each other's company.

It was a bright evening in August.

The sun was setting with a splendor to be nowhere seen only in the sunny south.

The two mids were standing with their arms on the taffrail.

The captain being ashore, taking the extra liberty leave he had granted himself, Ju was sitting on a gun carriage awaiting his return, listening to the lads' conversation, and using his privilege of offering interpretation.

"What do you think of yonder craft, Lal?" said Jack, "anchored just in the way of that heavy-hulled Dutchman?"

"Well," replied Lal, cautiously, "as far as I can judge, she's English built—in fact, an English king's ship. But what do you take her for?"

"Well, then," (here he lowered his voice) "either one of the French smugglers we are going in search of, or worse, one of those rascally Madagascar pirates."

"If you think so why don't you tell your father of your suspicions?"

"In the first place, my father is not here to tell; in the second, my suspicions were only aroused this morning while ashore. But first tell me, is the first luff on board?"

"No; he went ashore shortly after you and the captain."

"Ah, then," said Jack, "that looks more serious still, at least as far as my suspicions are concerned. But listen, and I will tell you. Walking through the Plaza Reale, I strolled into a *cafe*—one of those places, you know, where the lower room is arranged in divisions, the partition being so high as to convert each department almost into a separate room. There were two men in conversation, that was certain. But what they were saying, was anything but certain. For a time I could not distinguish more than a word now and then. At length, however, by dint of nearly cracking my ears and straining my eyes, I made out:

"'Drunken captain, always ashore; or when not drunk, that same ship might be very easily seized by a bold party.'"

"Whew!" whistled Lal. "It doesn't sound at all unlike a proposal to set up in business as pirates on a large scale."

"You are right, Lal, and we must circumvent them yet."

"But did you make out the visage of either of the speakers?"

"No, for their voices, like their faces, were muffled; but my opinion is, the drunken captain is my poor father, the ship the *Sea Dragon*, and the arch-villain —"

"The devil, I should think," said Lal.

"Exactly so, old fellow, but who, here on earth, calls himself Lieutenant Raffle?"

"Him the bery debil, dat rascal leftenant," said Ju, adding with the quickness and savageness of all Africans, when the passion of revenge is aroused, "we cut him troat directly he comes on board."

"Not bad advice," said Lal.

"Nay, Lal, that plan won't do; mine are only suspicions. If we were to attempt that, we should be committing mutiny."

"Better commit mutiny, as massa midshipman say, den let rascal lieutenant commit murder, and steal ship and ebervting," again interposed Ju.

"No—no; we must wait till my father comes on board."

"Well, perhaps you are right, Jack."

So the conversation dropped, but the two midshipmen kept their eyes intently fixed upon the suspicious vessel, and anxiously awaited the return both of captain and lieutenant.

"Let's hope," at length said Jack, "my father will come back to the ship less drunk than usual."

Alas for the futility of human hopes!

That night Captain Grigg was brought on board more drunk than ever.

Now that would not so much have mattered had there been any certainty that the attack,

whatever it might be, would not take place that very night.

And, somehow, Jack had a notion that it would.

What was to be done?

Who could he speak to? For if the first lieutenant were really guilty, it was possible other officers might be also, and that would be only making matters worse.

So, after much cogitation, he resolved to tell his father his suspicions at once before the lieutenant returned again on board.

Then, followed by Lal, he entered the captain's cabin.

By this time, and by dint of the assistance of two or three sailors, he had been got to bed, where he lay hopelessly drunk and insensible.

"Great Heaven, what shall we do to bring him to his senses?" cried poor Jack.

"Better dash water in 'ims face dan let him be killed in his bed," said Ju.

Acting upon this advice, Jack at once dashed about a pint of cold water in his face.

This aroused him, more the indignity than the cold water, perhaps; but lifting himself up, he cried:

"Mutiny—mutiny! pistols!"

"You are right, father; at least, I think it is so. Come, rouse yourself. I have much to tell you of importance."

"What, you, Jack," he replied, with a stupid stare.

"Yes—yes. But, for Heaven's sake, arouse yourself."

But it was useless. He fell back again immediately afterwards.

His son, however, wasted another hour in his efforts to revive him.

"Jack," suddenly said Lal, "did you hear that? It sounds to me like the grating of a boat against our side."

"By Heaven! then, there is something wrong."

In another moment, pistol and cutlass in hand, they were on deck.

The lieutenant was standing, calmly looking into the water.

"Well, young gentlemen," he asked, calmly, "what brings you on deck so quickly, and armed, too?"

"Lieutenant Raffle," replied Jack, "the captain desires to know what boat that is alongside."

"It's a lie," he replied. "The captain is too drunk to ask any questions."

Then from the boat alongside, a voice cried out:

"Is your drunken captain on board?"

"He is," replied the lieutenant.

And almost simultaneously with the reply, which was the watchword, some thirty or forty well-armed sailors leaped on deck.

"It is as I thought. Take that, villain!"

And Jack fired his pistol in his face, but it flashed in the pan.

Lal fired, but with the same effect.

Both were now seized and bound.

It was seen also now that the conspiracy must have been deeply and long made from within the ship; for while the few men on deck looked passively on, the rest of the crew were all secured under hatches.

Let us take a view of matters as they stood in the captain's cabin.

At length, aroused by the scuffle on deck, and the water together, he stared with astonishment at seeing Raffle and two other men standing by his bedside.

"Hallo," he cried, with a drunken thickness of voice, "what's the matter with the ship? Does she drive? What weather is on?"

He evidently supposed that there had been a storm, and that the ship had been driven from her anchors.

"No—no; never fear," replied the lieutenant, instantly. "We are at sea with good weather and a fair wind."

"At sea?" replied the astonished captain, who was now fast recovering his senses. "How can that be, lieutenant?"

"There, now," replied Raffle, coolly, "don't be alarmed; listen to the truth, bear it like a man; do as you are told, and I will befriend you."

"Befriend me!" exclaimed the captain, now really sobered. "Do you mean mutiny, sir?"

"There, now, be cool and calm, my good fellow, and I'll let you into a secret."

The captain glanced hastily around to see if his pistol and sword were at hand.

But no.

The dark traitor, knowing the desperate bravery of the man, had taken precautions against such a contingency.

"Well, listen," he continued. "You'll soon know all. You must know I am the captain of the ship now, and this is my cabin, so get up and walk out. I am bound for Madagascar to revenge the injuries the Spaniards have inflicted on my countrymen, and to make my own fortune, and the fortunes of the brave fellows who have helped me to treat you to this little surprise."

"Rascal!" cried the captain, "get out of my cabin!"

But laughing, the lieutenant grimly said:

"I mean you no harm. If you like to make one of us and turn rebel, I may perhaps in time make you one of my lieutenants; if not, you shall have a boat, and be set on shore as soon as I can have it done."

"In the fiend's name, who are you?" said the captain, following the ruffian, as he led the way on deck.

"Rob the Rover, the terror of the ocean," was the reply.

"Then, look you, Rob, Raffle, or whatever your name may be, I will not budge from this ship without my son and the other young midshipman."

"Then have your own way, you driveling old fool. You shall walk the plank at once, then," cried Rob the Rover. "Over with him at once, lads!"

"Stay, men," said Jack; "my father knows not what he is saying. Father," he continued, firmly, "while there is life there is hope. Get you away from this ship. Better both should be saved than one lost."

"Now away with you!" shouted Rob. "The boat is provisioned, and moreover there are a few firelocks and some ammunition."

So saying, the pirate captain left the waist, and walked to the quarter deck, leaving his orders to be carried out by subordinates, the last order being that the two midshipmen should have their irons removed as soon as the boat left the ship's side.

"Farewell, my good, kind friend," said Lal; "and should you ever reach old Boston again, tell my mother I am well; say not where or with whom I am."

"Ay, that I will, lad," replied the captain, with tears in his eyes. "In the meantime, remember death rather than dishonor."

"Fear not," cried Jack, shaking his father warmly by the hand. "Whatever happens, I shall never dishonor you; so take heart, and the next time we meet, it may be to deal out vengeance on this scoundrel."

"Under Providence, it may be so. But enough; if we must part, it were better we part at once."

Had Captain Grigg not been of this opinion, it would have mattered little; for the next moment he was hurried over the side by the sailors with whom he was left in charge.

It was with tearful eyes that both lads witnessed the boat's departure.

Half an hour afterwards, their irons were removed, and they were, as far as the ship was concerned, at full liberty.

CHAPTER IV.

ABOUT the middle of the following day, the *Sea Dragon*, now changed to the *Sudden Death*, no inappropriate name for a pirate, especially one commanded by Rob the Rover, entered the Mozambique channel.

Suddenly the man at the masthead, cried out "a sail!"

This cry running through the ship, was heard by Rob and his first lieutenant, a man who had risen from before the mast, and rejoiced in the name of Redfern Dick.

"Why, there are two vessels!" cried Rob. "They are, from their rig, Indian sloops; but no Indian vessels put into that island."

It was on the north-eastern portion of Madagascar.

"Then what do you make of them, captain?" asked Redfern Dick.

"Nothing as yet," was the reply. "However, see that every gun is double-shotted, and all the men at their posts."

The lieutenant having obeyed this order, again looked through his glass.

"They are both sloops, and both at anchor."

"Good!" replied Rob; "they will not long keep to their cables, when we get within range. Prepare the bow gun!"

"Now, then," he said about a half an hour afterward, "wake them up with a shot from the bow gun."

The ball whistled across the waters, but there was no answer.

"Another," said Rob, "double-shotted."

Still there was no reply.

The men were now getting angry—the lieutenant equally so.

"See, sir," he said, putting down his glass, "they will escape us. They have slipped their cables!"

"The crews may, but the vessels won't," replied Rob, coolly. "Don't you see they are running in shore?"

"Well, and what do you make of that?" replied Redfern Dick.

"Why?" replied Bob, "that they are friends, but mistake us for a king's ship—that they have, in fact, run away with the sloops, and now are hiding from Dutch William's cruisers."

"In that case, what will you do?" asked the lieutenant, much chaffed; "if the sloops should not, after all, turn out to be prizes?"

"Do! why, send a boat ashore, and if I am right, assure them we are friends, and ask them to join us. Those sloops will be invaluable in running in shore, as you see now. So man a couple of boats at once; young Grigg will command one, and you take Dashwood with you."

"Is that safe, begging your pardon, captain?" asked the lieutenant.

"Safe, ay. The lads will not part from each other, and if you should see the slightest intention of so doing, send a ball through the attempted runaway's head!"

"No chance of escape this bout," thought Lal, who very distinctly heard the order given.

The boats were speedily lowered and manned, each having at its bow a small brass gun.

The two sloops, which were anchored in a small cove, seemed deserted; not a soul was to be seen on board.

"It is of no use overhauling them," said Redfern Dick. "The captain is right; they have run away with those sloops, sold the cargo, and have now run inland, thinking we are king's men after them."

"Now, you two youngsters," he added, to Lal and Jack, "we'll march into yonder wood, and take care you both stick alongside of me, or I'll blow your brains out. You heard the captain's orders?"

"By Neptune!" he exclaimed, suddenly, and pointing to a copse with his pistol, "there is some skulking scoundrel."

He fired as he spoke. There was a slight groan, and a sailor tumbled forward.

"So I have winged you, my mate, have I?" said Dick, walking up to him. "But what the devil did you do skulking down there like a frightened hare?"

"Are you not a king's officer? Is not that a king's ship? We took it to be the *Sea Dragon*," replied the man, very humbly, and terrified from his suspense.

"That ship was the *Sea Dragon*, and I was a king's officer," replied Dick. "But that ship is now the *Sudden Death*, commanded by Bob, the Rover, and I am now his lieutenant. Who are you, and where do you hail from?"

"The sloops are the *Firefly* and the *Wasp*, commanded by Captain Dangerfield."

"Who, like a gallant fellow," interrupted Redfern Dick, "adopted them with their cargoes in the Indian Ocean, without the owner's permission."

"Right you are, sir," now replied the man, with more confidence.

"Very well, then; there is an end of all palaver. Go back and tell your captain Rob the Rover would like to sail in his company. Tell him, also, that to prove it's all fair and above board, I, with four of my people, all unarmed, will meet him, with as many of his people, also unarmed, when he can make short work of it, and tell me whether we are to take the sloops with or without him, and his crew as friends; for have them we will!"

"There is no fear, sir. The captain will only be too glad to sail in such good company," replied the man.

"Then don't let the grass grow beneath your feet; and it grows quickly in this country."

The sailor speedily disappeared through the bushes, or copse, and within half an hour, ap-

peared, followed by four rough, unkempt-looking rascals, all armed to the teeth.

"Hallo!" cried Redfern. "Men, look to your arms; these fellows mean mischief."

In a minute, however, they threw their arms upon the grass, and invited the lieutenant and his party to meet them midway.

This was speedily agreed to, and Captain Dangerfield, a good-looking young man, and certainly, in appearance, not half the rascal he really was, and Lieutenant Redfern Dick had agreed to terms.

Dangerfield, indeed, with his two ships, had agreed to sail in consort and under the command of Rob the Rover.

These preliminaries being arranged, Dangerfield, with several of his party, at once proceeded on board the *Sudden Death*, to ratify the treaty of joint piracy with Rob.

Within a week after falling in with their new consort, they were enabled to set sail together, and in a few days were off the Arabian coast.

Captain Dangerfield had imparted information to Rob that numerous treasure ships were to be met with on that coast.

They were near the mouth of the river Euphrates, when, through the stilled air, there burst upon their ears the dulcet sounds of Indian music.

"What have we here. Old Neptune and his court out for a holiday airing?" asked Lal.

"Neptune be bothered! But I forget you have not been in the east before," replied Jack.

"It is the vessel of some great Indian prince on his way, perhaps, to fetch his bride, for, mark you, how gaily she is painted and gilt, as well as the silks of colors which decorate her ropes and sails."

"Would that we could warn her off, then, if she has treasure on board."

"It is most probable that she has great wealth in gold, silver, precious stones, and silks, and rare fabrics."

"Then Heaven help her owner, if he be on board!" replied Lal.

She was a very large vessel, and carried ten guns, but of such a caliber that the report, compared with that of the English ship's guns, was that of the bark of a lady's lap-dog to a mastiff.

So that when Rob ordered his guns to fire a command for her to come to, the reply of the proud prince by his guns was ridiculed by the sailors.

Indignant at her not bringing to on the moment, Rob at once ran his vessel alongside, and boarding commenced.

Now, although proud, luxurious, and in some instances effeminate, the Mohammedan has ever been found brave, even heroic in action.

Hence a bloody conflict ensued, the success of either party being for a time doubtful.

At length, however, numbers won the victory. The Mohammedans were defeated, the Prince Achmet, son of the Mogul emperor, with several of his nobles, were sent in chains on board the pirate ship, while his numerous slaves and sailors were hurled into the sea.

Great was the delight of the pirates on ransacking the vessel, for she was literally laden with utensils of gold and silver, precious stones, sandal wood, ivory, and rich silks.

The dress alone of Prince Achmet was worth a king's ransom.

Greater, however, was Rob the Rover's delight when, from a wounded slave, he heard that Prince Achmet was then on his way to meet his bride, who, even then, he expected, could not be far from the mouth of the Indus, with, in all probability, as much wealth on board her galley as had her intended lord.

"Now, lads, to look after this fool's bride!" shouted Rob. "She can't be far away, and when we find her, we shall make a mighty haul. As for you, youngsters," he added to Jack and Lal, "signal the *Wasp* and the *Firefly* to know if they have made out the bearings of the Indian ship."

"I hope to Heaven they have not, or will not!" said Jack to Lal, as they proceeded to obey orders.

"Look to the southeast, the *Wasp* is answering signals," said Lal, after a short interval.

"What do you make out?"

"By Heaven, all I feared! the Indian ship is doubling yonder cape."

"The *Wasp* is off to bring her to, in company with the *Firefly*."

"The devil!" cried Lal

"Now, youngster," cried Rob, "have they answered our signals?"

"The *Wasp* says," replied Lal, "she can see the Indian ship rounding yonder small cape, and that she and the *Firefly* have ordered her to heave to."

"By Jove! we are in luck's way! It is what I expected; signal them we shall speedily be alongside," said Bob, adding to Redfern: "They have my instructions. You take a boat's crew with two midshipmen, and board her. You know the rest."

"Ay—ay, sir!" returned the pirate lieutenant.

"What does he mean by sending us with Redfern on board?" whispered Jack to Lal. "Some devil's trick in that!"

"We shall soon see," was Lal's philosophic reply.

CHAPTER V.

LAL was right. They soon did see, and hear, too.

Within an hour they had got within reach of the two consorts.

Then came the booming of heavy guns.

"They are in action in earnest; the *Mogul* fires pluckily," said Lal. "But see," he continued, "the *Mogul* is hauling down her colors, the fire is too heavy for her."

The next minute the *Wasp* had thrown out her grapples, and the crew were clambering over the sides of the devoted Indian.

"Now, Redfern," said Rob, "carry out your order."

The next moment two boats, each armed with long bow guns, and manned with crews armed to the teeth, were lowered.

One boat was under command of the boat-swain, and the other under Redfern Dick.

The boats were soon alongside the Indian ship, and the crews on board.

What a sight presented itself!

The long, level deck was strewn with the bodies of slaves.

The pirates had lost no time; for already had they begun to pile their plunder of gold, jewels and precious stones in small heaps, and even to partake of the rich Indian fruits.

Nearly one half of the latter portion of the deck was covered with an awning of snowy whiteness, while beneath it reclined a bevy of dusky beauties attired in robes of cashmere and silks, of every hue suitable to the bright sun of India.

One of the ladies, for an Asiatic, was wonderfully fair.

She was the daughter of a sovereign of the hill tribe, and her features were of classic mold, regular and exquisitely chiseled.

Well might the captain of the *Wasp* exclaim, as he entered the tent, and his eyes first lighted on her:

"A prize, by Neptune! Worthy of an emperor!"

And as he spoke, he went up to her, and rudely clutching her hand, was about to kiss it. But dashing his aside, she exclaimed, with indignation:

"Base slave and sea-robber! who art thou that darest touch the hand of Lela, the princess? Away, cowardly, infidel dog! Fearful will be the revenge my husband will take for this insult to his bride!"

"Ah—ha! my pretty, charming vixen, he has not the power to injure me. Come—come, be not so coy, and by Neptune, I will now kiss thy lips instead of thy hand!"

And the ruffian rushed towards her.

She arose, and held a jeweled pistol to his face.

"Stand back, villain!" she cried, "or I will fire!"

It was at this identical moment our two lads, with Redfern Dick, were approaching the awning.

Lal sprang forward, and presenting his pistol in the ruffian's face, exclaimed:

"Approach but a step nearer to harm that lady, and I will shoot you like a dog!"

Redfern immediately interposed, and addressing the princess, said:

"We wish you no harm, lady. We would only restore you to him you have lost—whom you love."

"Infidel dog! What mean you? Speak you of my husband?"

"I do speak of your husband; he is now on board our ship, and awaits you."

"If," she replied, "you are not enemies, but friends, why detain him on board that ship?"

"Because, to be plain with you, it is the will of my captain that you visit your husband, and not he visit you."

Clasping her hands, and looking heavenward, prayerfully, she said, addressing Lal.

"Tell me, is what that terrible man says true? is my husband on board that ship?"

"It is true, lady, that the Prince Achmet, the son of the great Mogul is on board that ship."

"Heaven be praised!" she said. "Then he is still alive. But," she added, suddenly, "I see it now. You are all sea-robbers. You have taken him prisoner. But it matters not, I will no longer refuse so that you let me see my betrothed—my beloved. Take me where you will!"

"Now, that's sensible," said Dick, returning on board to make preparations for the return of the boats.

"Poor lady!" said Jack, as they followed the lieutenant.

"She had no alternative, but she must be a noble creature to prefer the risk of such a destiny rather than not see her husband," replied Lal, adding in a whisper: "I am determined to rescue her, Jack."

In a few minutes the princess, with two female attendants, were transferred on board the *Sudden Death*.

As they reached the deck, Rob the Rover was standing in the midst of some half dozen of his crew, with his arms folded, and his countenance beaming with malignant satisfaction.

"Which among you is commander of this ship?" inquired the princess on reaching the deck.

"I, at your service, my dark charmer, and I am very glad to have such a visitor," replied Rob, stepping forward, and attempting to take her hand.

"Back, rascal!" cried the princess. "Wouldst dare pollute us by a touch?"

"Now, look you, Captain Rob," cried Redfern Dick, roughly, "you ordered me on a special duty, and I am here to report the result."

"Ay—ay, Dick, you are right; while I am fooling here, I am forgetting my duty. Look you, youngster," he added to Lal, "take these women below in my cabin, and send the steward's wife to attend them, and then return here."

"Ay—ay, sir," returned Lal, who nothing loth, conducted the princess and her women below.

"How now, Dick? What prize did ye find on board this princess' ship?" said Rob, as soon as the lady had disappeared below with Lal.

"But little did I find, save a few jewels and some gold, which I have brought with me in the boat."

"Little!" replied Rob, savagely. "By —, I know she was laden with valuables."

"Ay—ay, Captain Rob; but before I got aboard, she had been ransacked by Derk and Jack, of the *Wasp* and the *Firefly*, who now have on board their sloops all that's worth having, save the princess herself. The princess' female attendants they have divided between the crews of the sloops, and even the guns and small arms."

"So far, so good, Dick," replied Rob; "but look you, we must get Derk and Jack aboard here, and persuade them to send their treasure on board the *Sudden Death*, where it will be safe until we reach the island, where it can be deposited in safety."

"Ay—ay," replied Dick, with a meaning grin, "if you can persuade them to trust us."

"If!" replied Rob, savagely; "they have sworn to obey my commands, and if they do not, I will myself shoot them through the head, as I would even you, if you attempted mutiny, or even to secrete that which should be shared among us all upon the island."

"You are right—you are right, Captain Rob," replied Dick, apparently readily agreeing with his superior; but in reality not feeling quite comfortable, as he remembered that he had already secreted jewels to a considerable amount.

"But now, captain," added Dick, what shall we do with this Indian ship? She is valuable; can't we run her in to the Isle of France, and sell her?"

"And you, or Derk, or Jack, would like to take charge of the prize, and to escape with the plunder you may have secreted," replied Rob, ironically. "No—no, Dick, you are all good

friends of mine, and faithful to your oaths, but it is only while under my eyes, and within reach of my pistols. No—no, friend Dick, we'll fire her magazine—blow her to atoms."

"What," cried the lesser rascal, "with all her people on board?"

"Yes, and why not? You know dead men tell no tales; alive, they would be dangerous, and an incumbrance; dead, they, as well as ourselves, will be better off; but now give rest to your jaw tackle, and signal the *Wasp* to send and fire the Indian ship's magazine."

"Ay—ay," replied Dick, leaving to obey the order.

"Now," said Rob, aloud, "for my dusky Tartar."

And he proceeded down the companion to his cabin.

As Rob entered the cabin of the princess, she eagerly advanced towards him, exclaiming:

"Where is my prince—my betrothed husband?"

"Nay, fear not for his safety," replied Rob; he is under the protection of one who will be your friend—your devoted slave."

"You a friend!" she replied—"you a sea-thief—the murderer of my betrothed husband!"

"Lady," he replied, "it is not as you say. Your betrothed is alive, and within a few yards of you. Will you consent, if I set him free, to share a rover's life—to become a rover's bride?"

"Never!" she replied. "I will die a thousand deaths rather than accept your execrable offer."

"Then, lady," replied Rob, coolly, "you love not this prince, who you call your betrothed husband."

"Love him, man!" she replied, passionately; "I would die a thousand deaths for him!"

"Pardon me, this is not so, lady; for at a single word you could save his life. The refusal of that word will send him to the sharks."

"That word, man?" she asked, nervously.

"Yes," he replied, "to my question. If, upon reaching my island home at Madagascar, you will become my princess—my wife. I will give you five minutes to decide. Consent, and I will, at the nearest point of land, set the prince on shore, or, if he will it, give him a boat and provisions on the instant of your decision in my favor."

"And if I refuse?" she cried, in agony.

"He dies at sunset to-morrow," replied the pirate, and he abruptly left the cabin.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN at the time specified, Rob returned to the cabin, he found the princess in deep affliction, with her face buried in her hands.

"Now, lady, your decision," he demanded, sternly.

For minutes the princess bowed her head in her hands in profound thought—grief—then in a tone of the deepest indignation, she replied:

"Cruel man, I am humbled to the dust. It shall be as you desire. I am your slave for life; for what is the value of my wretched existence compared with the life of Achmet, prince of the Mogul empire? Hindoo widows sacrifice themselves at the tombs of their dead husbands; can I do less to save the liberty and life of a live husband—for husband he is to me in the sight of Allah."

"At length, my beauty," replied Rob, "you have been brought to reason. But," he added, with his usual coarseness, "no tricks, or I retract my promise of saving his life."

Confident, however, that with the watch he could keep upon her, the lady would not attempt what he called tricks, Rob going on deck at once had the prince brought before him, and confronted with the princess.

There was a refinement of cruelty even in this; for he would not permit them to approach each other, nor the prince to speak, or at least, the princess to hear what he said; for as the former spoke to his beloved, his voice was drowned by the beating of drums.

To describe the agony of the lovers would be impossible; we will therefore only chronicle that a boat, being got ready, was lowered, with the prince in it, with some water and provisions.

Rob's eyes glistened with a demoniacal satisfaction, as he saw the rope attached to the boat cut.

He had got rid of his rival, at least.

The prince called out defiantly to him, threatening vengeance.

"Begone, dog!" cried Rob, "or I'll fire into you; and thank your lucky stars and my good nature that I have saved your miserable life."

"Infidel dog!" exclaimed the princess, who was standing by an opening in the bulwark. "Fire upon him at once; like him, I scorn, defy you. If we cannot live, we can, at least, die together. I come, my beloved!"

And to the astonishment of all around, the next minute she had leaped into the sea.

"The she devil! But she shall not escape me," cried Rob, adding: "Fifty pieces of eight among the men who bring that woman on board; a hundred if both are brought!"

As the reader may imagine, the poor girl had no chance of escape; for in a minute three of the best swimmers in the vessel were in the water, and in a few minutes a boat was manned and lowered.

The lady had reached her betrothed's boat, and he was attempting to lift her in; but, alas! he was too weak, and she was speedily grasped by the sailors, and placed in the boat, while three of the men got into the prince's boat; one held a pistol to his head, while the others rowed back to the ship.

With grim satisfaction and fiendish delight, Rob watched the two lovers return to his deck.

"Fools!" he exclaimed. "Did you expect so easily to baffle Rob the Rover?"

"Coward, dog, and thief!" replied the prince. "Would that I had thee alone at the sword's point for a few moments."

"Gag the fellow," said Rob to the boatswain. This was done on the instant.

Turning to the princess, he said:

"Girl, you have broken your compact. Can you guess what will be your punishment?"

"Do with me as you will, wretch; the quicker the death, the better."

"Nay—nay, I will not that you die; the punishment would be too easy. You shall be confined under lock and key till we land at Madagascar; nor dream of escape by suicide; that will be prevented."

"Have you finished, wretch?" she asked with scorn.

"No, girl. The first portion of your punishment will be to witness that of your would-be husband, when you will learn how Rob the Rover treats those who defy his power."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, now imploringly; "you promised me his life."

"I will keep my word, ay, to the very letter; nay, even to sending him to sea again in a boat."

"Then, even now, wretch that you are, I can thank you," she replied, with a sickly smile.

"Hush, girl," he replied, savagely. "You would thank me more to shoot him through the head. But mark me, however you take the sight, it is you who have brought his fate upon him. Hold her by the arms," he added to two of his men, "and as you value your lives, see that she neither injures herself nor quits your grasp."

"What fresh outrage is this?" she said, as she made a fruitless effort to escape from the men who had now seized her.

"Now, lads, look smart there," continued the villain, disregarding her words; "tie the fellow's hands and feet, into the boat with him, and send him adrift with water and provisions so placed that he can see, smell, but not touch them."

This barbarous sentence sent an involuntary shudder through the frames even of the crew, villains as they were.

"Rascal," muttered Lal, through his set teeth, "you shall pay dearly for this yet, if I live."

As for the lady, for a minute she was speechless with horror.

Then in piteous tones, she exclaimed:

"Shoot him—shoot him, I pray of you, rather than consign him to this horrible fate. Do this, and I will be your willing slave."

"Not so—not so, my dusky charmer; it is too late; neither man nor woman shall deceive Rob the Rover twice," he replied, with a fiendish laugh. "Over with him!"

The order was obeyed on the instant.

The boat was lowered, cut adrift, and the unfortunate prince left to await death by starvation—still worse, thirst, beneath the broiling sun of the tropics.

The lady looked on with a terrible calmness.

"Allah," she murmured, prayerfully, "will avenge this foul deed in his own good time."

She said no more, but the compressed lips, the fire in her eyes, bespoke a terrible resolve within her bosom.

"There's mischief in the poor girl's eyes," whispered Jack.

"Ay," replied Lal, "and I'd willingly give a year or two of my life, for her to have the opportunity of dealing it out in the proper quarter speedily; but see," he added, "even the villain himself seems to quail a little under their glare."

Lal was right, for after rudely staring her in the face for a minute, Rob, with an ironical laugh, said:

"Oh—oh! my dusky charmer, we rovers care but little for the threatening glances from women's eyes. Your claws are cut. Now, below with you, nor shall you quit your cabin till the end of the voyage. Take her," he added, to the man who held her, "to the small cabin next mine, and tell the stewardess, as she values her neck, to leave her neither by night nor day till she receives further orders from me."

CHAPTER VII.

STEADILY for the next ten days, the pirate ship kept on her course. On the thirteenth they were within a few leagues of the mouth of the Mozambique Channel, and coasting along a large island during the greater part of the day; they came at length to a safe and secluded harbor on the larboard side of the channel.

On either side of this harbor, to the great astonishment of Lal and Jack, was a strong wooden fort, each having a battery of ten guns.

The ship being brought to anchor, the grog was at once served out, and skylarking in the shape of fiddling, dancing, singing and grog-drinking, set in.

As if desirous to keep the crew in good humor, Rob himself joined them, and to their surprise, not only joined in their jocularities, but ordered another double allowance of grog to be served out.

Had he trebled it, it would not have been refused.

Indeed a regular saturnalia was on the tapis, and long before the order came for putting out the lights, the majority were hopelessly drunk and insensible.

The sober minority, consisting of less than a dozen, had, as we shall see, a good reason for avoiding intoxication.

As for our lads, Rob excused either of them from taking charge of the watch.

So nothing loth, but sick and weary of the scenes they had witnessed, Jack and Lal retired to their hammocks, and were soon sound asleep.

In the course of the night, however, Jack was considerably surprised on awaking to find Lal close beside his hammock.

"Hallo! is that you, Lal?" exclaimed Jack.

"What's up?"

"Hush, Jack; speak only in whispers. Don't you hear anything?"

There was a slight splashing of the water, as of a boat being lowered.

Then a grating of some heavy substance against the side.

"Queer—in the middle of the night, too. What's afloat, Lal?" said Jack.

"Pretty plain, I think," replied Lal. "The skipper is bolting with the treasure chest, and that's the reason he wouldn't go ashore in the day time, and made the men drunk at night. Well, it don't concern us: the morning may find us with winning cards in our hands; but listen, they are safely off."

And distinctly they could hear the sound of muffled oars—nay, through the porthole, perceive by the starlight, the long boat making for the shore.

"Maybe Rob is not with the party," said Jack.

"Think it not, Jack," replied Lal; "he's not such a fool as to trust such treasure out of his own keeping."

"I wonder whether the rascal has taken the princess with him?" mused Jack.

"Great Heaven!" returned Lal, "I never thought of that; but enough, let's pray for the morning. To go on deck now would be dangerous."

The ship during the night had changed its position, so as to bring it in range of the guns belonging to the forts on shore.

As for the lads, the earliest moment they could make their appearance without exciting suspicion, they were on deck.

Burning with anxiety, Lal descended the companion way leading to the captain's cabin, and confident in his suspicions, opened the door.

It was tenantless.

He then sought the stewardess. She, too, was absent. His worst suspicions were confirmed.

Forgetting prudence in his indignation, he made his way to the quarterdeck, where he found Redfern standing alone, with his arms folded and gazing upon the fort.

Touching Dick upon the shoulder, Lal said:

"Lieutenant Redfern, I have a favor to ask of you. I wish leave to go on shore."

"Go ashore—go ashore," said Dick, as if staggered with astonishment. "Why, what do you want to go ashore for?"

"That's neither here nor there," replied Lal. "I want leave to go ashore, and if you don't give it me, I'll swim for it."

"Why don't you ask the captain?" sneered Dick.

"You know well enough he's not aboard," was Lal's reply. "I know that Rob, true to his name, has taken the treasure chests ashore, and that he made the crew drunk that he might do so without their knowledge. I know also," continued Lal, "that the villain has taken the princess ashore."

"I'll stop your jaw tackle," replied Dick, and giving orders to a couple of the men, Lal was immediately seized, taken below and put in irons.

"And you, too," said Dick, turning fiercely on Jack, "saw what the other young black-guard says he saw?"

"If you mean Rob leaving the ship with the treasure and the princess, yes," replied Jack.

When the men returned again upon deck, Dick cried:

"Here, take this mutinous youngster, and tar him with the same brush as the other."

Jack was immediately hurried below, and sulkily submitting to the anklets and handcuffs, was securely fastened to the cabin wall alongside of his brother midshipman.

"Isn't this lucky," said Jack, when they were left alone, "that the lieutenant has been fool enough to lodge us together?"

"What luck?" returned Lal; "to be chained like two wild beasts in a cage, only to grin at each other's fetters?"

Wearily wore away the day in their close confinement, and when at last, some time after they had fallen asleep at night, they were both awakened by the grating of a key in the rusty lock.

"What's up now?" said Lal, starting up.

"They think to murder us in our sleep," said Jack.

As the door opened, it disclosed by the light of a bull's-eye lantern the form of a negro.

"Julius Caesar, by all that's gracious?" exclaimed Lal, with a laugh. "Why, what brings you here at this time of night? And where have you hidden yourself all this time?"

"Speak low," said Ju, closing the shade of his lantern, and seating himself between the two boys, "and I will tell you all about it."

"Fire away!" replied Lal; "only tell what help you can give us?"

"Top a little, Massa Lal; help come by-and-by. I will now tell 'ee what you like to know," replied the negro. "Nothing happened," he continued, "till we anchor off here; den in de night Captain Rob lowered two boats, put big chests on board, and go ashore."

"Stay," interrupted Lal. "Did he not take the princess with him? Did you not also go?"

"Ess—ess, both c'rect. Missee Princess go—I go, too."

"Where is the lady now? Is she in the fort?" asked Lal.

"Golly," replied the negro, "Massa Lal very much hurry. Lilly Missee Princess is not in either of the forts. Rob too cunning for dat; he send her and the chests up de country 'mong de woods somewhere."

"You rascal!" cried Lal; "why did you not find out where he sent her?"

"Umpossible, Massa Lal; but s'pose not too much hurry, I find Missee Princess out when we go on shore."

"Hem! I believe you, Ju. Then we are to be taken ashore?" said Lal.

"Go ashore!" repeated Ju. "Ess; den I help you, 'cos I shall know all 'bout where lily Missee Princess is gone."

"But how will going ashore help your knowledge, Ju?"

"'Cos," replied Ju, "I save Captain Rob's life from a big rogue like himself."

"You saved his life?" said Lal; "then, you vagabond, you deserve to lose your own for your pains!"

"S'pose Captain Rob had been killed," replied Ju, coolly, "then none know where princess is, and Captain Rob would have died like a gentleman, and not be hung up on hooks like a big sea thief, as he is."

"Well, Ju, there is some reason in that; but how came it about that you could save his life?"

"When we land," continued Ju, "officer and men come out from fort, and treat Captain Rob like great king, fire guns, and kick up great hullabaloo, as if bery glad to see him; but when they found Rob was going to send the chests up the country somewhere, then officer and Rob come to big words. Officer placed his pistol in Rob's face, and fired; but not before I had time to knock his pistol out of his hand."

"Did the officer escape?" asked Lal.

"Golly, no; Rob shot him through the head. And then the men no more grumble, but let him do what he like, and Rob give me gold and say I shall be with him always. So great rascal, great fool, too, 'cos he tink I save his life once, I save it always; not tink I save his life from rascal pirate like himself, so dat honest man hang him by-and-by."

"Golly, Massa Lal, dey better look out for squalls if dey want to get much out of de chests Rob's got in his keeping."

"I don't think they have much to fear," said Lal. "He wouldn't dare to rob them of their fair share."

"Don't know so much 'bout dat," replied Ju; "'cos you see, Massa Lal, when Cap'en Rob done speaking to Massa Redfern Dick 'bout you he muster crew, and tell 'em dey may all have liberty leave, but dey must muster in full tomorrow, 'cos rascal says in dese words:

"My men, I have reason to believe there are some among us who, instead of delivering up prizes they have taken, so as to be fairly divided among us all, have hidden them."

"At dis palaver," continued Ju, "there was much hullabaloo; all rascals cry: 'Hurrah for brave Cap'en Rob, and death to the sneaks!'"

"The cunning scoundrel! He is getting up this shindy that he may the better rob the captains of the sloops!" said Lal.

"Ess—ess, Massa Lal, dat just what I tink; but you soon know all 'bout it. In morning Massa Redfern Dick come, and have irons knocked off, and take you ashore; but," added the faithful fellow, almost imploringly, as if he feared the impetuosity of Lal's temper, "when go ashore, Massa Lal, hold 'im candle to de debil, else get a bullet through 'im head before time to get away from rascal pirates."

"Never fear, old Ju, I'll begin at once to prepare a stock of patience and forbearance."

"Ess—ess," replied Ju, dubiously, as he arose to quit the cabin. "Massa Lal mean well, and believe him got a lot of patience in him inside, but directly open 'im mouth, it go off like gunpowder, with a great noise."

So saying, Ju glided from the cabin as noiselessly as he had entered, taking care to carefully lock the door after him.

CHAPTER VIII.

ABOUT an hour after sunrise, Redfern Dick entered the cabin accompanied by the ship's smith.

The lieutenant, who was now in the full naval uniform of a king's officer about to figure on some state occasion, said:

"Now, look you, young scamps, instead of punishing you as you deserve, I will set you free, and give you liberty to go on shore, on one condition, and that is—that you say not a word of what you saw the other night to any of the men."

"When are we to go ashore, and how?" asked Lal.

"Within an hour, and with me in my boat," was the reply.

"Do we go as free men, or as prisoners?" asked Jack.

"Give me your word of honor, each of you, that you will keep silence on the one point, and you shall have your side-arms and pistols, and be treated every way as free men."

"Then, we agree!" both replied.

And in a few minutes, Lal and Jack stood on the quarter-deck free men.

By Dick's permission, the lads were allowed access to the arms-chest, and each secretly taking a double allowance of small arms, one of which they concealed in their jacket pockets, returned to the lieutenant for further orders.

Accompanied by Ju and Redfern Dick, the two lads entered the boat alongside, and were pulled towards the shore.

The nearer they approached the land, the closer became the lads, examination of the two forts.

Approaching the landing-place, they observed two boats under charge of a couple of hang-dog looking ruffians, armed to the teeth.

"The boats of the *Wasp* and *Firefly*," said Jack. "Derk and Jenks have then landed."

"You are right," replied Lal, "and they are moored so that the guns at the fort could sink them in a minute."

"What's up now?" said Jack, after landing, as he pointed to a large, clear space behind the forts.

The scene, indeed, was sufficient to attract attention.

Arranged in line between the batteries were two hundred men, all of whom they recognized as belonging to Rob's ship.

Upon the side furthest from the sea, stood in line some fifty savage-looking ruffians, each armed alike with a brace of pistols, a cutlass, and a long knife.

"By Heavens, Lal!" said Jack, "this must be Rob's body-guard."

"Ess, Massa Lal," said Ju, coming up to them. "Dem rascals is Cap'en Rob's friends. Dey man de forts when he's cruising, and it was their capen who tried to kill Rob."

On one side, nearest the sea, and in range of the guns of the fort, stood about thirty men drawn from the crews of the *Wasp* and *Firefly*.

In the center of the square formed by the men stood the captains of the two vessels, confronted by Rob.

"So, gentlemen and brother captains," said Rob, with mock politeness, "I give you welcome to this island home of mine. When you agreed to sail under the flag of Rob the Rover, both you and your companions took the oath to abide by our laws, or pay the penalty."

"We did," said the captains, at the same time.

"And part of the agreement," continued Rob, "was that prizes taken by either of us should be cast in one common lot for division, according to rank."

"Bah, prize!" answered Derk. "It is true we fell in, after the storm, with a wreck, the mere hull of a homeward-bound sloop; but she had nothing but ballast. She had been boarded before by some crew in the same trade as ourselves, and her gold chests emptied."

"Hold, there liar!" cried Rob, "and let an honest man than yourself answer for you."

Then looking towards Derk and Jenks' own men, he shouted:

"Come, forth, Dick Roberts!"

"Dick Roberts!" exclaimed Derk. "The villain! I ordered him to remain on board the *Wasp*."

"Ay—ay, Master Derk, Dick Roberts!" replied a young man, stepping forward. "Dick Roberts it is, and didn't I promise ye, when you flogged me, that my turn would come some day? It's come now, sooner than I expected."

"Take that, you infernal lubber!" replied the enraged Derk.

And in an instant a bullet whistled past the lad's head.

"Draw their teeth, lads!" cried Rob, coolly.

And before Derk or Jenks could defend themselves, they were disarmed and secured.

"Send them afloat in the *Firefly*, alone, without a single ounce of gold!" cried several voices.

"So that they may bring upon our stronghold a British cruiser," replied Rob, with a sneer. "No, they deserve a punishment that will keep their tongues from harming us. No—no!" he added, "Captain Derk's motto is that 'dead men tell no tales;' so, as Dick Roberts here will tell you, for his own safety, he sunk the Indianman with all on board. He can't object to the fate he has meted out to others. No, I repeat, they must die, and the first man who



A bloody conflict ensued, the success of either party being for awhile doubtful.

raises a murmur of objection to this sentence, shall share with them their fate! Tell off a firing party, and away with them at once to the fort!"

On the instant, the ever-ready Redfern Dick told off the firing party, and with these choice rascals—for they were chosen from Rob's body-guard—the two captains disappeared.

Never was so murderous a decision received with such silence.

Awe-stricken, bewildered, they stared at each other, as if not believing in the possibility of the sentence being carried into effect, till the sharp cracking of muskets proclaimed the truth. Then, as if aroused from a trance, came a low murmured growl, or groan of horror, chiefly from among the crews of the *Wasp* and *Firefly*, of course.

With a ready wit—for desperate as Rob was, he dare not excite too far men upon whom he must hereafter depend so much for his success—he cried in a stentorian voice

"My lads, and you men of the *Wasp* and *Firefly*, especially, you have seen how I punish treachery: beware you bring not the same fate upon yourselves. These two traitors would have caused the death or capture of you all, for, had they succeeded in obtaining a share of the wealth we have upon this island, it was their plan to part company with us at once, and sail for the plantations of Jamaica. Having reached there, they would, with a large portion of their wealth, have purchased free pardon for themselves, leaving you to your fates. By their death, I have secured the safety of us all, and you shall have the whole of their rich prize among you, and that, too, shared equally, without distinction of ranks, for myself, I will not accept a dollar of it. All I ask in return is fidelity to your flag."

If by the murder of the two captains, Rob, for a few minutes, lost popularity this appeal to the men's avarice, and his artful declaration of self-denial were repaid with immense interest, for now the air rang with cheers and hurrahs for Captain Rob.

To return to Lal and Jack, who had witness-

ed, with silent horror and disgust, the whole scene, Rob sent them to the quarters appointed for them while ashore (one of the small huts), simply with a caution, and a threat in case they should not be to the fore on the instant of his sending for them.

CHAPTER IX.

FOR nearly a week Lal and Jack had been kept in close confinement, and in entire ignorance in regard to Rob's future intentions.

One morning they were somewhat surprised by a visit from him, accompanied by two armed ruffians.

Rob approached them good-naturedly, saying:

"Now look, youngsters, I would be your friend. To come to business at once. I am about sailing with *Wasp*, *Firefly* and *Sudden Death* on an expedition to Johanna, to help the queen against her enemy, the king of Mohilla. Now, although I have plenty of men, I want officers, and if you will take the rover's oath and join me, there will be wealth and fame to be gained."

"And if we refuse your offer?"

"Close imprisonment during my absence from the island, and death by torture on my return, if I find you have not changed your mind," was the stern reply.

"If it be the devil himself to whom you leave us in charge, it will not alter our resolution. Death before the life of a pirate," replied Lal.

"We will see, my young bantam," Rob answered.

Then to one of the men he said:

"Fetch hither Gaspard, the one-eyed half-caste."

At the appearance of this man the boys trembled for their resolution. The fellow was tall, of good figure, not absolutely ugly, as far as features went: but he had but one blearing eye, which seemed out of place, and should have been in the middle of his forehead.

"Gaspard, my friend," said Rob, "I leave

these mutinous scoundrels in your charge, and as you value life, see that they escape not from the island. If they attempt an escape, shoot them as you would rats."

"Brave commodore—kind master!" replied the fawning wretch, "I am your slave."

"Now, lads," cried Rob, addressing his two followers, "clap on their irons and remain with them till Gaspard leads them to our stronghold in the morning."

The lads submitted in silence, rejoicing, however, that they were not to be parted from each other.

Alas! for that poor consolation; for, as Rob quitted the hut, he added:

"And look you, Gaspard, after this night see that they have no opportunity of holding speech with each other."

Literally Gaspard kept his word, for the next morning, having supplied them with a meal of bread and French wine, he ordered them to follow him; then placing Lal between himself and one of the men, and Jack in a similar position between two others, they began their march.

Their dreary road lay through a gloomy and almost primeval forest during the whole day, and arriving at a certain point, Gaspard blindfolded Lal.

By this process Lal concluded they were approaching the stronghold itself.

He was right. They were entering the path that led to the hold. It was so narrow that but one person could pass at a time, and was contrived in so intricate a manner as to form a perfect labyrinth.

Gaspard led the way, dragging Lal by the handcuffs, and soon arrived at the gate of the stronghold.

Now he was led across what he thought to be a courtyard, paved with wood instead of stone, until again coming to a halt, Gaspard said:

"Lift your lazy legs, youngster, or maybe you will come to grief with your shins."

Lal found he was ascending a flight of steps. Reaching the top of these, he heard a sound as if produced by lifting a vertical door or shutter.



"Stand back, villain," she cried, "or I will fire!"

Being thrust through this opening, he heard the door fall with a heavy crash behind him, and the bandage was removed from his eyes. But to what purpose? for he could not see, as all around was total darkness.

"Now you shall see where you are," said Gaspard.

As he spoke, by means of flint and steel, he struck a light, and lighted a small oil lamp, the lurid flame from which gave just enough light to make darkness visible, and Lal almost believed that utter darkness would have been preferable to the sight of that long, irregularly-shaped, and gloomy room or cave, whatever it might be, and the nooks, and niches, and crevices he could just discern in different parts.

The wretch dragged, rather than led him, to one of the niches to which we have alluded, when, to his horror, he saw upon the earth, but with chains around its ankle-bones, the skeleton of a man.

"Devil, enough of this, or, handcuffed as I am, I will fell you to the earth."

"Ho—ho! and I would shoot you through the head—it is Rob's orders; but no, I would not let you slip out of the world so easily; like the wretch there, you should be starved to death and fed to the rats. Ho—ho! they'd soon pick your bones clean. Now you shall have food."

The half-caste sound a silver whistle, and the pirate who had acted as the other of his guards, stepped into the place with a flagon of wine and some provisions.

The man, whom Gaspard addressed as Gerard, placed the refreshments on the floor and withdrew.

Gaspard then said:

"You shall be relieved of your bracelets," and at once removed his handcuffs.

While doing so, Gaspard's evil eye lighted upon the garnet ring upon Lal's finger—the ring given to him at their parting by his first and only love, Olive.

"You must give me that ring, it's my prize," demanded Gaspard.

With this he grasped at Lal's hand, but Lal gave him a blow on his one eye that sent him reeling—nay, almost stunned him, and following up his success, snatched a pistol from his belt.

"Now move another step towards me, and you die!" cried Lal.

As if conscious of his helpless position, still with the expression of a madman on his face he exclaimed:

"English dog! you shall die for this yet."

"Repeat that threat," cried the now enraged Lal, "and let the consequences be what they may, I will shoot you where you stand!"

At this, with a low growl like a baffled beast of prey, he slunk backwards and blew his whistle, the door flew up, and he disappeared.

The ruffian gone, Lal had time to think of the possible consequences to himself of the fracas.

In such suspense Lal passed many days, his food being brought at regular intervals by the same man, who would, after the first visit, come and depart without a word.

To relieve the monotony of his confinement, Lal would, after the first few days, pace up and down his prison, examining as well as he could by the wretchedly dim light of his little lamp, the various nooks and crevices, with a faint hope of discovering some aperture by means of which he might escape.

But escape—no, he dared not think of escaping until he had discovered the whereabouts of Jack, who, in all probability, was confined in some similar dungeon.

Then the princess, where was she? Not far, he felt certain. With such like speculations did he occupy his mind, and at length resolved upon still more carefully examining his prison.

There was only one spot he had not hitherto examined, and that from sheer horror; for it was the niche in which he had seen the skeleton.

At length, however, he resolved upon exploring even that niche.

He did, and stumbled over the bones, and fell face forward.

But the next instant Lal was on his feet again.

He was rejoiced to find a small cavernous hole, through which the light dimly entered from above. So, entering the cavern, he proceeded along, feeling his way, and at length placed his hand upon a spot, which from the coldness of its touch, seemed iron.

Surely it must be a door. If so, perhaps the entrance to a chamber or another cavern, which in turn might lead to the ramparts or the woods.

Pushing through, he found himself in a large chamber, dimly lighted by two windows. He looked out, and found that the room was some twenty feet from the ground below.

However, there was a tree within reach, and that would serve him in place of a ladder, which the pirates on their quitting had not failed to remove.

In one corner of the room he discovered an old chest, in which he found a pistol, a fowling piece and a small quantity of ammunition.

They had evidently been forgotten by the pirates; he could now fight for his life, if he could not escape before it was attempted.

Then determining to run all risks, Lal, taking hold of a branch of the tree to which we have alluded, swung himself to another branch, and took breathing time near the trunk.

As he did so, he heard the sound of footsteps, and also the growling of a dog, and immediately afterwards one passed by the base of the tree with a couple of leather pannier-like bags slung across his back, and followed by the one-eyed half-caste, Gaspard.

The dog led the way into the labyrinth.

"Maybe he is carrying food to the princess or poor Jack," thought Lal. "If so, I shall obtain my end by following, so follow I will," and suiting the action to the word, he at once descended the tree, and having looked well to the priming of his pistol, followed Gaspard and the dog at such a distance as not to attract observation.

The sea was in the distance, but between him and the beating waves stretched a patch of naked sand, broken by heaps of stones.

"A cemetery, by Jupiter!" exclaimed Lal.

for beneath each heap there lay, doubtless, the body of a pirate.

"Now what could have brought the rascally half-caste to a place like this?" thought Lal, as concealing himself he waited the return of the pirate and his dog.

In the course of an hour or so he saw them returning, and now both dog and man seemed laden—at least the bags were swollen out, and the half-caste himself carried another slung across his back.

When they were well out of sight, Lal emerged from his concealment, and proceeded in the direction of the cemetery, where, after satisfying himself that he was unobserved, he began a close examination of the stone heaps.

One of these was in the form of a cross.

He began to remove the stones, taking care, however, to mark their relative positions, so that he might replace them exactly.

One half hour at this employment, and he exclaimed with surprise.

"Oh—ho, my fine fellow, I begin to smell a rat."

He had, in truth, come to a couple of barrels.

The lid of one of them he lifted, and the secret of Gaspard's visit was out.

They contained jewels, small utensils and ornaments of gold and silver. All plunder taken by the pirates, and by them placed there, probably, only for a time.

Lal carefully replaced the stones, and taking up his gun, was about to return, but as he re-entered the thicket, he was startled at seeing in the pathway other footprints than his own, and recently made, too.

So, looking again at the priming of his gun, he entered, but had not advanced a dozen yards when he caught the sound of a rustling in the bush.

There was no mistake, neither could it be a wild animal; of that he was certain, which behooved him now to be more than ever upon his guard.

"By Jupiter!" he muttered, "this won't do; better get shot at once than bear this suspense. I must find out who this fellow is, and what he wants. I would fire into that bush at once; but after all it may not be either of the villains, Gaspard or Gerard, but some poor beggar of a prowling native."

Walking forward a few yards, the path turned, and he found himself in a small cleared space of ground, and his suspense was at an end, for within hearing distance he saw the pirate Gerard coming towards him.

At once he brought his gun to his shoulder.

Gerard halted, and with something like a smile, and in a friendly tone, cried out:

"Belay there, youngster; you've got away from your moorings somehow, but the devil a reason is that I should shoot you, or you me."

The tone, the manner was friendly, at least for the man.

"Why, therefore," thought Lal, "should I shoot him? for after all, he may not know of my discovery of the hidden treasure, and if not, can have no motive in killing me."

But at the same time he noticed that the fellow had a long knife in his belt, and a terrible looking hatchet in his right hand, the sight of which made him nervous.

In this quandary, Jack determined to give him a chance of showing his real intention, and this he did by a neat little ruse.

Falling a little backwards so as to get under cover of the thicket, he drew out the ramrod of his gun as if to feel that the ball was well down; but instead of returning it again, kept it in his hand, and without letting Gerard see it, got out a handful of powder.

He then fell still further backwards, and fired at a large bird which at the time was flying over, but instantly passing his hand over the muzzle of the gun, dropped in the powder and ran the ramrod down the gun.

No sooner did the wretch hear the report, than, hatchet in hand, and with the gesture and savage aspect of a devil, he leaped rather than ran forward.

"Halt, villain, or I'll blow your brains out!" cried Lal, bringing his gun to his shoulder.

"Fool!" yelled the ruffian, "the gun is not loaded. You have discovered our secret and shall die!" And flourishing his hatchet, he sprang upon Lal, who fired.

Lal, at the next moment fell to the earth, stunned.

How long he remained senseless he knew not, but recovering, he found himself stretched upon the earth, with his head upon the knees of some person, who at the same time was chafing his temple with some kind of spirits.

That person was no other than his friend.

"Jack," he exclaimed, "you here!"

"Rather lucky for you, old fellow, that I am, and that I arrived in the nick of time. But look there."

Jack, as he spoke, pointed to the dead body of the pirate Gerard, which was a yard or two distant.

"Then," said Lal, "I killed the fellow?"

"The devil a bit, Lal. Your ramrod missed its aim, and the fellow's hatchet would have split your head in twain, had not a bullet from my pistol entered his brain almost at the same instant that you fired."

"But how came I to be stunned and lying here?"

"That's easily enough accounted for. The brute's hatchet, falling from his hand, struck you in the temple, and luckily again for you was it that it was the wood and not the steel that struck you. But now," he added, "let's bury this fellow's carcass, and clear out of this as soon as possible, or maybe the one-eyed half-caste, with some of his crew (for there's more than enough for you and I left in the island), will be upon us."

"The murdering wretch should be left for the jackals. He deserves no burial."

"Tut—tut, Lal," replied Jack, impatiently.

"The man's dead, and he deserved his death; but, look you, if his body is found above ground within the next few hours, that one-eyed half-caste, Gaspard, will be close upon our track. Already he may have missed him, for this Gerard was, if not one of his partners, one of his pets."

This reasoning being conclusive, by the aid of the would-be assassin's own hatchet, a grave was dug in the sand by the lads, and the body interred.

CHAPTER X.

By nightfall the lads had made their way to the sea shore.

Jack informed his friend that, since they had parted, he succeeded in making a complete circuit of the island, but reserved for a more fitting opportunity the relation of his adventures.

They halted for the night by the mouth of a small river.

"Does this run through the island?" asked Lal.

"I think not; but we shall know more about it by this time to-morrow, for we shall have to paddle along its surface for some leagues or so."

"How along its surface; where is our boat?"

"Upon the other side of yonder hillock, and near the water's edge," replied Jack.

And upon reaching the other side of the mound to which his friend had pointed, another surprise awaited Lal in the shape of a large boat turned keel uppermost.

"By Jupiter! you are a wizard to have discovered so much in so short a time," cried the delighted Lal.

"Nothing of the kind, old boy; nought but an escaped prisoner; but that belongs to the yarn I have to spin hereafter; but now let's to roost, and put our heads under our wings."

"But the roosting-place," said Lal.

"Let's lift up the boat and see."

So saying, Jack lifted the boat over, and exhibited a couple of thick, warm blankets.

"By Heaven! this is wonderful," cried Lal; "now for a fire."

To gather the materials and kindle a fire was the work of nearly an hour, and by the side of that the lads lay down to sleep.

"Hilloa!" cried Lal, as starting up the next morning and rubbing his eyes, he saw the smoldering embers of their last evening's fire at their feet, and by the purple light which had just begun to appear in the east, saw the dark, overshadowing masses of trees on one side, and the bluish sheen of the rippling river on the other; "where am I?"

"In the land of hunger, old fellow," replied Jack, laughing, "so the sooner we take to the boat and bring down a bird or two, the better."

"A grand notion," replied Lal.

In ten minutes the boat was launched and they were afloat.

After pulling some distance up the river, the banks gradually narrowed, and turning into a small outlet, Jack said:

"Here's something I want to show you, Lal."

The channel was not more than ten feet wide, and ran between a lofty islet and the lofty bank of rock which arose almost perpendicularly from the water to a height of seventy feet.

"Some distance above," continued Jack, "is one of the jolliest caves you can imagine, and I don't think that anybody except Rob ever looks into it."

"How, in the name of Heaven, did you manage to discover it?" said Lal, looking above incredulously.

"That's not to be told yet, it's part of my yarn; but I'll tell you what I'll do if you follow—I'll show you the way to it."

And suiting the action to the word, Jack stopped and fastened the boat.

The lads then commenced to climb up the face of the rock, by means of jutting points, until they reached a ledge which led into a large, irregular apartment.

The dim light prevented them from seeing the vastness of its size.

"A stunning hiding-place!" said Lal; "what a pity we can't get a light."

"That's a bore; but never mind," replied Jack; "let's keep along side this wall, and feel our way. You are in search of the princess, and you know, Lal, 'Faint heart never won fair lady.'"

"Come, Jack, no more of that, or it may shiver a little of our friendship," replied Lal, testily.

But Jack answered not; for by the aid of the trifling light afforded by the opening into the cave, he had begun to grope his way along.

A few yards more, and the wall curving, the light was of no avail.

So in utter darkness they proceeded, the wall now being damp and slimy, and every now and then their hands lighting upon a cold, clammy lizard.

Advancing still further into the darkness, a huge bat would suddenly flop against their heads, nearly stunning them (for, be it remembered, the bats of Africa are giants by comparison with the mere winged mice of England).

"Hilloa, Jack!" cried Lal, as one of these creatures struck him; "these devils are fitting natives of the land which harbors Rob and his companions."

"Too good—too good for 'em, Lal; the creatures are winged angels to the rascals, and have more right here than we have."

There was just enough light to make darkness visible, or little more, for they could see that they were in a kind of conical or domed natural chamber, the floor of which resembled thick mud, and the walls and roof covered with creeping reptiles.

"Now," said Lal, "what is to be our next move?"

"Hush!" replied Jack, "listen! Can't you hear something like the moan or groan of a human being?"

Lal listened for a minute.

"Ay, by Heaven! you are right, Jack," he said, "and your discovery is coming. I hear it distinctly. Moreover, look ahead; there is a light shining through some crevice."

"You are right, Lal, and that crevice is from a door that opens into another cavern, or a chamber of some kind."

Feeling his way by the wall, till he came to where the light shone, he cried, with joy:

"It is a door—it is a door; an iron one, too, by its coldness."

"But what use to us is finding the door, if we can't open it?" said Lal, despondingly.

Jack, however, running his hand up and down the door patiently, at length exclaimed:

"Who shall say patience is not its own reward? Whoever is the custodian of this place, has left the key in the door."

"The greater proof, we have had our pains and trouble for nothing, and that there is nothing beyond it."

"Avast there, messmate! I have heard too many human groans in my little time to be mistaken in the sound," replied Jack.

And scarcely had he spoken when, the lock yielding to the rusty key, the door rolled back upon its hinges.

"Debil! rascal pirate! you nigh starve me to

death! You dare not kill oder way for fear of Commodore Rob!" cried a faint voice.

"Julius Caesar, by all that's gracious! You are right after all, Jack," said Lal.

"Yes, it is poor, dear old Ju!" Jack exclaimed.

And before another word was spoken, they had severed the cords by which the poor fellow's wrists were bound together, and the rope by which he was secured to the wall.

Poor Ju had been kept in close confinement in this miserable den ever since the departure of Rob the Rover on his expedition to assist the Queen of Johanna.

"Tell me, Ju," said Lal, impatiently. "Do you know where the princess is confined?"

"Golly, Massa Lal, I don't know; for Rob, at the last moment before leaving the island, changed his mind about leaving her here, and take her with him 'board de *Sudden Death*."

"The poor girl at sea with that villain, Rob!" moaned Lal. "Then vain has been my solemn promise to rescue her."

"Come—come," interposed Jack, "no time for sentiment. We must away before any of the ruffians return."

So saying, and taking a lamp which he found in a corner, all three made the best of their way from the cave.

Reaching the boat, with all possible despatch, they immediately embarked.

But a sudden and violent storm coming on, they were obliged to seek shelter on a densely wooded island, a few miles distant below the cave.

Having hauled their boat well up on the bank into a dense undergrowth of bushes, they were fortunate enough to find a deep recess among the rocks, where, by aid of their sail, which they converted into a temporary tent, they found themselves comparatively secure, before the storm burst upon them in all its tropical fury.

By nightfall the storm had cleared off, but it was deemed prudent to remain upon the island until the following morning.

As the island abounded in bananas and plantains, they found no difficulty in laying in a plentiful supply. Wood-pigeons and wild pigs were also plentiful, and by a few well-directed shots they not only supplied themselves with a bountiful supper, but were enabled to stock the lockers of their boat with a large surplus for future use.

When they awoke next morning, the sun was just streaking the horizon.

Ju now had secured two trunks of small trees which he knew to have a buoyant property.

Lashing these to the side of the boat, to act as floats, and to prevent them from being overturned by any sudden flaw of the wind, they hoisted sail, and in an hour or two, were rejoiced to find themselves at the mouth of the river, with the open sea before them.

Out at sea, their frail boat seemed scarce a speck upon the broad bosom of the ocean.

As evening was setting in on their third day afloat, Jack cried out, joyfully: "A sail—a sail ahead!"

And stripping off his red shirt, he hoisted it on an oar as a signal.

For a long time they waited in dread suspense, when there came across the waters the booming of a gun.

"Hurrah! that's to tell us she has made us out," said Jack.

"Hurrah! I cry, too, for she is bearing down upon us. Now for a long pull, and a strong pull to meet her, be it for better or for worse," said Lal; "we can't be worse off than we are at present."

In less than an hour their boat was alongside the vessel, and Jack, Lal, and Ju stood before the captain on the quarterdeck.

For a minute or so this worthy scanned the three from head to foot, after which he said, gruffly:

"Two youngsters and a nigger! who the devil are you, and what brought you into the Mozambique in that cockleshell?"

Rather doubting the character of the ship, its crew and captain, Lal hesitated for a moment; however, "Tell the truth and shame the devil," he thought, and so answered:

"Two officers of his Britannic majesty's ship, *Sea Dragon*, and their servant," adding a *resumé* of the mutiny and their imprisonment on, and escape from, the island.

"Pirates?" replied the captain. "Ay; these

seas are infested with the rascals, notwithstanding Dutch William's efforts to destroy them."

This reply satisfying Lal that the speaker was no pirate, as he had begun to think, he ventured to ask:

"And you, sir; who are you, and whither are you bound?"

"Fairly put," replied the captain, with a grim laugh. "Well, I am Captain Bowker, of the ship *Swan*, bound for the port of London, with dye wood, ivory, and palm oil."

"I am glad to hear it," replied Lal. "And if you will give us a passage to England, or even put us on board the first English man-of-war you will fall in with, we will pay you handsomely."

"Ay—ay, that's a bargain; you shall have the deck cabin yonder. But get you there at once, and a mess shall be served out to you, for you look as hungry as a shark ashore. Devilish odd," he added, to an officer by his side, "that we should pick up waifs two days running."

"Ay—ay, sir. But the other poor devil is on the doctor's list," replied the officer, who then led them to the deck cabin named.

"By Jove! Jack, fortune has not deserted us after all. Hey for old England once more!" said Lal, when they were alone in the cabin.

"Look you, old fellow," replied Jack, "it's as well not to count your chickens before they are hatched, you know. I haven't made up my mind as to the real character of this craft yet."

A day or so later, and Jack was yet more uncertain as to her character.

If the aquatic bird after whom she was baptized is deserving of the adjectival expression for beauty and grace, then the ship *Swan* deserved her name.

Of great breadth of beam, but sharp forward, and very lean aft, and heavily sparred, she gave indications of speed which no person could be on board long without perceiving were abundantly realized.

Six small pieces of ordnance piercing her high and comfortable bulwarks, and a long twenty-four pound pivot gun, constituted her armament.

But the crew, and this excited Jack's suspicion, consisted of some thirty men, among whom were several Portuguese, most of them hard-looking fellows, and all of them dressed in the characteristic red cap, striped woolen shirt, and worsted sash.

There was the usual complement of officers; but between these and the men there was a degree of familiarity that shocked Jack's notion of discipline, for there seemed to be not the least subordination, except in matters immediately pertaining to the duties of the ship.

CHAPTER XI.

FROM certain information gleaned by Ju, the good brig *Swan* turned out to be a slaver, bound for Cuba, with nearly two hundred poor wretches safe stowed on her lower deck.

The poor fellow was in great terror as he imparted this startling fact to his two friends, in the privacy of their cabin on the upper deck.

"Well—well," replied Lal, thoughtfully, "we must make the best of a bad job; never say die, old fellow, for it will be hard, indeed, if, at our age, some opportunity does not offer of our escaping. But now, Ju," he added, "what make you out about the other waif this rascal captain said he picked up at sea the day before he fell in with us?"

"Not'ing, Massa Lal—not'ing, not at all; try to see all, to hear all, but not get at anything; so 'spose still on doctor's list. But look, see, Massa Lal, Massa Jack, dere is de bery debil hisself! where he come from to be here?" he added, his teeth chattering as he spoke, and pointing to the window.

Well might he have been terrified, for it was the face of the one-eyed half-caste Gaspard, looking ghastly indeed, as its outlines were brought out in full relief by the rays of the moonlight.

"The devil, indeed!" cried the astonished lads, simultaneously, at the same moment starting to their feet.

"Ess—ess, an' him de oder waif captain speak about, little doubt ob dat," said Ju.

"And as little doubt that he is leagued with the rascally captain to kidnap us to the American plantations," replied Lal.

In another minute, however, the half-caste

had run around to the cabin door, opened it, and appeared to answer for himself.

"Look you, youngsters," he said, in whispered tones, at the same time presenting a brace of pistols at their heads, "not a word louder than a whisper, or I'll blow your brains out if it costs me my life! I mean you well now, so listen."

"Well," said Jack, coolly, "fire away, let's hear what you have to say; no good, I'll take my oath of that, anyhow."

"Good or bad, it's this: I intended you no harm till you overhauled my secret in the cemetery, but after that I swore, for my own safety, to have your lives."

"And you were disappointed, you scoundrel," said Lal.

"I was, and so far you had the best of me, and it's this reason, too, I am on board this ship now; but look you further, the Commodore Rob plundered and murdered the captains of the *Wasp* and *Firefly*; then, with my help—for he could not have done it without—robbed the crews of their shares; after that, with the aid of Gerard, I helped myself, and so far all was square."

"Hullo!" cried Lal, with a bantering laugh; "I always thought there was honesty among thieves, but with yon nest of villians, it's dog eat dog."

"But," continued the half-caste, unheeding Lal's interruption, "as I have said, could I have taken you, I would have shot you, and remained for a time faithful to Rob, for my secret would have been safe; but when I found you had left the island, believing you might somehow fall in with Rob, with the help of one of the men with whom I hunted you, I packed all the gold and jewels I could collect in a couple of sea-chests, and we set out to sea together; but shortly after fell in with this captain."

"At this I was glad, for by her build and the whole cut of her jib, I knew she was a slave-ship, and concluded that the captain would not ask too many questions if I promised to pay him well when he landed in Cuba, and I then bought a portion of his slave cargo."

"So you intend to change your infernal trade for another as bad?" said Lal, adding: "But what has all this yarn to do with us?"

"Ay, I mean to become a planter, and then I shall know the luxury of keeping slaves, as I have known what it was to be the son of a slave mother. As for you," he continued, "it is this—if the captain of this ship knew I had been one of Rob's men, he would search my chest, take the contents, and cut our three throats after."

"Why our throats?" asked Lal.

"Yours, simply because he would be hanged by the governor of Jamaica as soon as you had said he had murdered the man of Rob's crew, for whom, after the commodore himself, the largest reward is offered; for the treasure I have on board, if taken, belongs, except a certain share, as prize money, to hungry William of Orange."

"Hem!" ejaculated Lal, "we are between Scylla and Charybdis, and for our own preservation have the offer of becoming a partner with this precious rascal. Suppose we take a few days to think it over?"

"All right," replied Jack, adding, to Gaspard: "Now you have our answer."

"That will do; but let it be as I wish, or I will denounce you, even at the certain cost of my own life, to this captain as two of Rob's officers, after which, for his own sake, and the securing my chests, he will find some easy means of disposing of you before he reaches either Cuba or the plantations."

"Well, we won't talk more about this to-night; if we must fall into such an infernal compact, we must," said Jack; "but look you, man—you said you had a companion in the boat when you fell in with this ship. What has become of him? Did he come on board with you?"

"No," replied the rascal, boldly. "When we got in sight of the ship, I put a bullet through his head, and tossed him overboard, thinking I had got rid of the only man I was likely to fall in with who knew my secret; so you may guess," he added, with his fiendish laugh, "my pleasure in coming on board to find you here; but now I leave you to your choice."

"You devil incarnate!" said Lal, as he quitted the cabin.

How drearily and with what anxiety the lads passed the next few days. Early one morning, however, they were startled by the cry of "Sail ho!" from the lookout on the mast-head. They had been drifting for some hours through a heavy fog, and the strange sail was almost close on board before she was discovered.

It proved to be the *Wasp*, who was now on a roving commission under the command of Redfern Dick.

The slaver was immediately boarded, not without a terrible resistance, however, on the part of her captain and crew.

During the conflict Redfern Dick received a desperate blow upon the head, and was carried in an insensible condition to his cabin.

After plundering the vessel of everything valuable, including the treasure-chest of Gaspard, the half-caste, and transferring that worthy, together with Ju and our two lads on board the pirate craft, the slaver was permitted to go on her way.

The command of the *Wasp* now devolved on one, Lieutenant Rufus.

Gaspard was immediately ironed, and securely fastened between decks, till such time as Redfern should recover from his wounds.

The *Wasp* was on her way to the pirates' stronghold on the island, and was fairly loaded down with plunder.

A few days previously they had fallen in with the *Indiaman De Vere*, on board of which was Sir Leofric Mordaunt, his daughter Olive, and Captain Darlington on their way to England.

The vessel had been plundered and set fire to, Darlington was slain, Sir Leofric had been left desperately wounded on board of the burning ship, and his distracted daughter, Olive, was now a prisoner on board the *Wasp*.

Great was the surprise of Lal when the heart-broken girls made their appearance upon deck.

"Olive—dear Olive!" he cried, and in a moment the long-sundered lovers were locked in each other's arms.

To attempt describing the meeting of the two lovers is beyond our power. Suffice it to say, that in the course of subsequent conversation, the foregoing facts were elicited.

Briefly Lal related to Olive the facts known to the reader, leaving out till the last, of course, his knowledge that the ship was then bound for the pirates' island.

CHAPTER XII.

A BRISK run of three days, and the *Wasp* was entering the jaws of the so well-remembered bay.

"There, Olive," said Lal, "is the pirates' nest, and those two buildings are his forts."

"Heaven!" cried the terrified girl, "what will become of us?"

"Fear not, Olive; let us hope for the best," said Lal.

After coming to anchor, orders were given by Rufus for the landing of the wounded Redfern, and the prisoner, Gaspard, the half-caste.

Then were landed the chests containing the plunder from the *Wasp's* recent cruise.

Lastly, our lads, with Ju and Olive, were taken ashore in the direction of the ground where Rob had murdered his two captains.

This space was now covered by a huge wooden hut, large enough to hold a hundred men.

At the end opposite the door through which the party were taken, stood the pirate chief in the midst of a staff of ruffian seamen.

He was attentively reading the report given him by Rufus.

"Ah, a woman!" exclaimed Rob, as he saw Olive approaching; "bring her before me."

Two of the ruffians rushed to obey, but Rufus and Lal both stood before them.

"Lay not a hand on that lady!" they cried, simultaneously.

"Mutiny! By the furies, I'll suppress it!" cried the astonished and enraged Rob.

"Dare not to harm her. She is the friend of my childhood," said Lal.

"And what have I to do with the friend of your childhood, boy?" said the pirate, sneeringly.

"Do you remember," replied Lal, unflinchingly, "kidnapping me and my servant here, as I was on my road from the Rev. Dr. Davenant's?"

"I do," replied the pirate, strangely to most

present, in greatly softened tones—nay, as if coming under some strong and unusual emotion.

"Then," continued Lal, "that young lady, like myself, was a favorite pupil of Dr. Davenant's. Nay, she was educated under his care; having lost her own mother, the good doctor's wife, Mrs. Davenant, brought her up."

"My —!" cried Rob, pressing his hand to his forehead, but suppressing the phrase.

Then by an effort recovering himself, he added to Rufus:

"But what have we to do with women here? Fool for your pains in bringing her. Take her away; put her under the care of the best woman you can find, and"—here he raised his voice loud enough for all to hear—"as you value your lives, let no man harm—nay, nor even offend her by a glance."

"One more question, and answer me truly," said Rob, with a terrible expression on his countenance. "Did the half-caste help you to escape in the boat from this island?"

Lal then recapitulated the whole of his adventures in connection with Gaspard, including the man's threat to starve him to death in the dungeon, save only the adventure in the cemetery and the shooting of Gerard.

"Bring the man Gaspard here," said Rob, after some few moments' thought.

"Well, commodore," said the ruffian, surlily, as he stood before his equally ruffianly chief, "how long am I to be kept like a dog?"

"Silence, you beast, if you would not have me brain you where you stand," said Rob, adding, "when did you know me to forbear punishment for disobedience to orders? Did I not order you to treat these refractory youngsters well, and look out that they did not quit the island?"

"You did, and I obeyed till they sought to murder me, and make their escape."

"Rascal and liar!" said Lal. "You threatened to starve us ere we tried to escape. Now did you not seek to tear the ring from my finger?"

"It's true I tried to take the ring, and even then, although you nearly brained me, I would have done you no harm, had you not murdered my mate Gerard."

"The man Gerard killed, and by your hand, youngster?" exclaimed Rob, playing suspiciously, for Lal's safety, with his pistol. "He was one of my best men."

"Now look you, Rob, I mean to answer plainly; for this rascal, I expect, had not intended to have revealed the secret, but he forces it from me. I did shoot the man Gerard."

"For what reason had you cause of quarrel with him?"

Lal then told circumstantially his discovery of the hidden jewels in the cemetery.

To describe Rob's countenance as he listened to this recital, would be no easy task.

It was ferocious, and exhibited the boiling rage, the premeditated revenge within his breast.

"So ho, you half-caste villain! in my absence you robbed the treasure chests, plundered the men of their shares, and so intended to get away from the island, and retire to some quiet place. You shall go to that quiet place sooner than you anticipated."

The half-caste knew full well the meaning of that threat from Rob.

It meant immediate death, or some terrible sentence.

Having lost all hope, Gaspard said, defiantly, and in a tone of voice so loud that all the men around could hear:

"Rob the Rover, you are the biggest traitor, the greatest thief in all our company. You yourself have robbed the treasure chests—nay, have hidden the chests themselves. I ask the men if one of them knows where the chests which belong to them are hidden at the present moment."

"That's true," cried several voices, with deep oaths.

Rob was now treading upon dangerous ground; among such men, when their avarice is appealed to, there is but small safety for a chief, even as bold as Rob.

But Rob allied cunning with boldness.

It did not suit him to quarrel with his men. A stray pistol bullet and the election of another chief might be the work of an hour; so raising himself to his full height, he said:

"Men, one and all, follow me, and believe

your own eyes—nay, you may use your own hands in dividing the property among you, giving me what share you will."

"Hurrah for our brave captain; the half-caste is a liar and a traitor!" cried many voices, simultaneously.

"But mark you, men," said Rob, sternly; "if I prove this fellow a liar, I will award him a punishment you have never yet seen."

CHAPTER XIII.

As our lads that same evening were sitting alone in the hut which had been assigned to their use, they were surprised by the cautious entrance of Ju.

"Ju, by all that's gracious!" cried Jack.

"Yes, Massa Jack, and I come wid a discovery, too. I discovered where dey put Miss Olib. She am in the norther fort where Rob lib."

"Then let us go to her at once," cried Lal.

Ju led them by a tortuous path at the back of the hut into the wood which skirted the little settlement.

After proceeding some distance through the darkness, they came to the wall of the northern fort, and by a faint light in the distance discovered a stone staircase.

"Is it possible that Olive can be confined in this place?" cried Lal.

"You soon see," replied Ju, and he led the way up fifty or sixty stone steps, which brought them to a circular landing-place.

"Now, Massa Lal, Massa Jack need go no farder," whispered Ju. "Look dere!"

The African pointed to a light above them which came through a few small bars of iron.

"A prison with a vengeance!" cried Lal.

But the next moment, raising himself by means of the bars, and looking through, he involuntarily gave an exclamation of delight and astonishment.

No wonder, for within that apartment, which was grandly furnished, sat Olive Mordaunt and the Princess Lela!

Ju explained to Lal and Jack that he had been told of this place by a young negress to whom he had been making love.

This gal, whose name was Tillah, was an attendant on the princess.

By consent of the princess, Ju had been taken into her confidence, and sent in quest of the lads in the manner we have described.

"Here, massa, is de key ob de door," said Ju, placing it in Lal's hand.

The door was immediately unlocked, and as they entered the room, Olive joyfully threw herself into her lover's arms.

"Dear Lionel!" she exclaimed, "we did not expect that you would be able to escape the vigilance of Rob and his men."

"It is the good work of my faithful Tillah," said the princess.

"And our faithful Ju," added Olive.

"Little did I imagine," said Lal to Olive, "to whom this man Rob entrusted you. But how is it," he said, turning to the princess, "that I find you here surrounded by so much luxury?"

"Because I am doomed, and—oh, horror! by my own mother, to become the wife of this sea-thief—this assassin of my affianced husband, Rob the Rover!"

She then went into a detailed account of what had befallen her since they last met.

It seemed from her statement that when Rob took her on board the *Sudden Death*, she did not know whither the vessels were bound.

"Guess my surprise," she said, "on landing I recognized my native country, my beloved Johanna. My mother was its queen, and my heart beat high with hope. The pirate knowing so well the queen's distress, respecting her enemy, the King of Mohilla, swore that he would withdraw his men and ships from her assistance without she would consent to give me to him as a wife."

"To this, in an unhappy moment, my poor mother consented, and when Rob had driven the enemy from Johanna, I was sent on his ship as his bride to be, and that marriage is to take place, he swears, at the close of the present moon."

"That," said Lal, "will be two days hence. The time is short; but let us hope that chance will help us."

At this moment Ju appeared at the door of the apartment.

"Massa Lal, Massa Jack, get away!" he

said: "colored lady say she know Rob has missed you, and is coming here."

At the alarm given by the faithful black girl, the lads beat a retreat, and retired to the hut, as they believed without being missed.

Before noon, however, next day, Rufus came to conduct them to the presence of Rob.

"What in Heaven's name can the rascal want of us now?" said Lal.

"I 'spect dere's mutiny, else a king's ship in sight—somet'ing like dat," said Ju.

"Let us hope it may prove to be the latter," answered Lal.

Reaching the ramparts on the northern fort, they found Rob pacing to and fro like an enraged lion.

It transpired that during the night some of the men had succeeded in seizing the treasure-chests, and getting them on board the *Wasp*, and under command of Redfern Dick, who it seemed had been only shamming sickness, had under cover of the darkness sailed out of the harbor. What rendered Rob so furious was, that he was prevented following the fugitives in the *Firefly* by the sudden appearance of a king's ship in the offing.

"So, youngsters," said Rob, approaching the boys, "you were not of the party of mutinous sneaks who have run off with the *Wasp*? Now, look, lads," Rob continued. "I have a proposition to make to you, which will enable you to escape from this island. I will give you, Mr. Dashwood, a boat, and send you on board King William's ship, which has even now entered the bay, and will soon be in the harbor. You can see the captain and tell him that half my men have deserted. I am not in condition to fight him; so, if he will give me eight-and-forty hours, the forts shall be surrendered to him without firing a shot from here."

"Now, the alternative?" asked Lal.

"That the landing of his first boat's crew will be the signal for me to fire the magazine, and blow to eternity all within the forts."

A terrible pang shot through Lal's heart, as he thought of Olive and the princess, for he too well knew the temper and determination of the man before him to doubt that he would keep his word.

"Give me five minutes to consult with my friend here," replied Lal.

"I will, and not a second more," replied Rob, at once leaving the lads alone.

"What's to be done, Jack?"

"Accept his terms, Lal."

"But, great Heaven! Olive and the princess are in his power, and no king's officer will submit to make terms with a pirate."

"Don't quite know about that, Lal. When that same pirate has in his power two ladies, one of them a lady of family, he'd at least be a brute to refuse him permission to escape, when we tell him that refusal will insure their murder."

"There may be something in that, certainly; but look you, Jack, it's just possible they may fire into our boat as we approach the ship, or, anyhow, hang us for pirates when we get on board."

"At all events," replied Jack, "we had better risk our lives rather than insure the murder of Miss Mordaunt and the princess."

"That's determined me. Let the miserable rascal have his life and his treasures, so that we have the women," replied Lal.

"Now, Mr. Dashwood," said the pirate chief, at the expiration of five minutes, "do you accept my offer?"

"We do," replied Lal, "and if you would not have a heavy broadside, or the landing of a half-dozen boats' crews, the sooner we go the better."

"We," repeated Rob, "I said not we. You and the black may go. Mr. Grigg here remains behind. He is as valuable a hostage to me as Miss Mordaunt."

"Then, villain!" cried the indignant Lal, "our compact is at an end!"

For a few minutes poor Jack, who had fully calculated upon accompanying his friend, looked chapfallen indeed.

"Accept; go at once, fool, and tell this king's captain that Rob the Rover has in his power the daughter of Sir Leofric Mordaunt, and the son of his friend, Captain Grigg, for, by so doing, you will save their lives as well as your own, which, half an hour hence, otherwise will not be worth a pinch of powder."

"Lal," said Jack, awaking suddenly from his reverie, as in a fit of inspiration, "accept; go at once. It will, I feel, be the better for us all."

"Do you really mean this, old fellow?" said Lal, a tear standing in the gallant lad's eye, as he thought of his friend's danger.

"On my honor, I do. I believe it will be the better for us all," replied Jack, shaking Lal's hand warmly.

"Then, by Jupiter, I'll do it," replied Lal, adding, however, dubiously: "But suppose anything were to happen to you, Jack? I should never forgive myself."

"Never fear," replied Jack; "all will come right yet, you know. There is the same Providence above us to protect us here as we should have in feather beds in England."

At that moment a report of a great gun came booming through the air.

"A truce to this palaver, youngsters; to the boat at once!" cried Rob to Lal. Then to his lieutenant: "That fellow means mischief; see, he has brought his broadside to bear upon the fort. Signal to him at once before he can treat us to his heavy metal, that we are sending a boat to him."

CHAPTER XIV.

"GOLLY!" said Ju, as shortly afterwards they got into the boat—"golly, Massa Lal, it all over wid cuss pirates; it's a king's ship, and 'im guns hab fort in 'im power."

"You are right, Ju," said Lal, "and, moreover, three of her boats are coming towards us, under cover of her guns; they must have been lowered before they caught sight of Rob's signal from the fort."

"Dat right, Massa Lal, but dere are four boats, and two wid brass guns," replied Ju, as turning a jutting point of rock, that formed a portion of the basin of the harbor, they came in sight of the formidable little flotilla.

"Rest on your oars, my men, or we shall have them giving us a salute with those brass pop-guns," cried Lal.

In great anxiety, Lal awaited the approach towards him of the flotilla.

In a few minutes more, the largest and leading boat was within speaking distance, the men resting on their oars.

"Who are you, and for what purpose have you put off from yonder piratical forts?" cried out an elderly officer; "answer quickly, or I will sink you."

"I am the bearer of an offer of surrender of

yonder forts on certain conditions," shouted Lal.

"Conditions!" returned the officer. "If this don't out-Herod Herod, I'm a Dutchman. Who ever heard of conditions of surrender between a pirate and a king's officer?"

"Great Heaven! can it be you, Captain Grigg?" cried Lal, who now plainly recognized in the old officer his friend's father.

"Halloo! and who the devil are you, my hearty, to have my name so pat?" returned the captain.

"Lionel Dashwood, once midshipman on the books of the *Sea Dragon*!"

"Is it possible! It is strange, but thank Heaven for it; but my son Jack, I fear to ask—but what of him—is he alive?" said the old man, his voice quivering with emotion.

"He is alive, sir, a prisoner in yon northern fort."

"Thank Heaven for that; but a prisoner, you say? Well, I swear by the old sea god, I'll soon set him free!"

"Stay, Captain Grigg," said Lal, as the old officer was about to give some orders to the officers in command of the other boats.

Then Lal delivered Rob's message, and pointed out the fearful danger in which Jack and Olive were placed.

"My God!" cried the captain, "then is there no other way of saving their lives but by letting this rascal and his crew escape?"

"I fear not, captain; for you know Rob is not a man likely to break his word."

"I too, to let him escape? I, who have prayed night and day for the chance I have before me of bringing him to justice? But it must be—it must be. The lives of my boy Jack and Miss Mordaunt shall not be sacrificed even that justice may be satisfied. So, lads, pull back to the ship."

Scarcely, however, had the gallant old fellow come to this—to him—most unpalatable resolution, when the guns from the two forts opened fire, and one of the boats was sunk.

"Treachery, by Heaven!" cried the captain. "Pick up the men and let us land at once. They have murdered my boy, but he shall be fearfully avenged!"

"The villain has been playing a treacherous part even in this. The story we heard of the desertion of the men of the *Wasp* was a lie. Poor Jack and Olive!" said Lal.

"Dat berry true, Massa Lal; see all de shore crowded with men who have come out of the forts; Rob means to dispute the landing."

It seemed so, for shortly afterwards the missing *Firefly* made its appearance from the western side of the bay, and opened a brisk fire upon the king's ship.

"The villain! by this ruse he thinks he has us on all sides. But pull hard, my hearties; the frigate's guns will protect us yet."

The guns of the frigate had opened upon the pirates immediately after the first shots received from the forts, and under their fire the captain and his boats effected a landing, though not without loss.

Once ashore, the conflict became severe.

The tars fought steadily, the pirates like men with ropes around their necks.

"To the southern fort!" exclaimed Captain Grigg, who, with Lal and Ju by his side, had in the course of half an hour driven the pirates back beneath the walls of their stronghold.

In another five minutes they would have been within, but Rob suddenly appeared upon the ramparts.

At the sight Captain Grigg ordered his party to cease firing, for by the side of Rob stood poor Jack, with a rope around his neck.

"Villian, hold!" cried the terrified captain.

"Ay—ay!" said Rob; "you have the best of me so far, but I will never be taken alive. Agree to withdraw your men to your boats, and give me the forty-eight hours, or I will hang this son of yours before your eyes!"

Seeing the captain hesitate, the heroic Jack shouted:

"Fear not for me, father. Do your duty!"

"My God, Mr. Dashwood, what is to be done?" cried the captain in agony.

But not seeing Lal by his side, he added:

"Is the lad dead or wounded?"

"No—no, captain, Massa Lal not dead or wounded," replied Ju.

"Answer quickly; it is my turn to make terms now. I give you three minutes!" cried Rob.

"Den go to your ole fader, de debil, wid your terms!" shouted Ju.

And ere he could finish the sentence, Rob the Rover lay stretched upon his rampart, shot through the lungs.

"What have you done, you black rascal? his men will now murder my son."

"No—no! see Massa Lal take care ob dat. Let's lose no time, cap'en; mount at once," replied Ju, pointing to a couple of scaling ladders that some of the captain's crew had, under cover of the smoke, succeeded in placing against the wall.

This conversation, if such it may be called, had taken place with almost electric quickness, and in another minute the British tars, cutlass and pistol in hand, preceded by the captain and Ju, stood upon the rampart.

For a few minutes—ten, not more—the conflict raged, when those of the pirates who were neither dead nor wounded, were begging for mercy, either to the captain and his party on one side, or Lal and Jack and their party on the other.

"Well done, Mr. Dashwood," said the captain, "and may Heaven bless you for saving my son's life!"

"No thanks, Captain Grigg; Jack would have done the same for me, and but for old Ju, there, I could not have done it at all. He it was who directed me to the entrance in the wall, by means of which I was enabled to attack the rascals in the rear."

"But the lady, Miss Mordaunt?" asked the captain.

"Thank Heaven she is safe, as is also the princess," replied Lal; "at least, so Jack says."

"Ay!" replied Jack.

"The princess!" repeated the captain, in astonishment. "Another woman in this den! But whom have we here?" he added, pointing to a man dying of his wounds near at hand. "One of the pirate's officers?"

"It is Rufus," said Lal, sadly, "and dying."

"Ay!" replied the dying young man. "I am Rufus, the son of Rob the Rover!"

"The son of Rob!" repeated both lads, simultaneously.

"Ay, and Heaven pardon me for my wrongdoing! but I could never quit my father, whatever his crimes—nay, by staying by his side, I have prevented him committing many. I thus could protect you and the lady. But," he added, "Heaven has rewarded me for the little good I have done by directing the bullet which

has saved me from an infamous death upon the gibbet."

"But," said Lal, "your real name—your father's real name?"

At that question the dying young man smiled, as if in satisfaction that he had not divulged his real name.

The next instant he had passed away.

"But the arch-villian, Rob," said the captain; "he fell from a ball from the black man."

"Ess, I told cus rascal long time ago I kill 'im, an' I kep' my word as good as white man."

"Who asks for Rob? He is here!"

The voice came from the dreaded pirate, who, dressed like one of his ordinary sailors, was not recognized at first.

"Captain Grigg," he said, "to you I have naught to say, excepting I would shoot you now, where you stand, had I life enough left. As for you, youngster, I would, before I die, tell you why I befriended you."

"In the name of Heaven speak, then," said Lal.

"For two reasons. In the first place," he replied, "because you were a favorite pupil of my brother, Dr. Davenant—my much-injured brother."

"You, then, are the younger brother who went to sea, and of whom I have so often heard the good doctor speak?"

"I am, and that's why I proved your friend."

"Then why did you kidnap me and my servant, if you knew that?"

"Because I was paid to do so by Sir Charles Opium."

"Yes, dat what I beliebe all along."

"I told you," continued the pirate, "I had two reasons for befriending you; the second was because I hated Sir Charles Opium, and for this reason: When Captain Grigg sank my ship, I escaped in the long boat with some thousands of pounds' worth of diamonds, nearly all of great size, and which I had taken from an Indiaman. Making my way with these to England, I dare not offer them for sale, for fear of being detected, and so was nearly starving. In this extremity, Sir Charles offered to purchase them. I agreed, and gave up the diamonds, but asking for the money, he laughed in my face, and threatened to expose me if I did not at once go to sea again. If I was prepared to go to sea again, he offered to get me, by his interest with King William, placed as lieutenant on board, and afterwards, as soon as we reached Corunna, he would forward to me a portion of the money he owed me. Captain Grigg's ship, the *Sea Dragon*, was that to which I was appointed, and the reason of my mutiny—"

"What?" asked Lal.

"Ah—ha!" he replied, with his old demoniacal laugh, the more horrible now because in the convulsions of death, "partly because Opium never sent me the money. Chiefly because I wanted riches, and like the tiger, had no distaste for blood. Ah—ah!"

And so died Rob the Rover.

"Poor—poor wretch, how horrible such an ending!" said the captain. "But now," he added, "to free these poor ladies."

"Now, father," said Jack, as they left the ramparts, "I am anxious to know how and by what means you escaped."

"That is soon told," said the captain. "I was the next day picked up by a ship bound for Jamaica. Once there, I found the governor,

an old shipmate. I told him my story. The frigate *Royal William* was in the harbor. Her captain had just died; so by his influence, the admiral at the station commanded me to bring her to England, ordering me on the voyage to look out for the rascal, Rob."

* * * * *

"Thank Heaven for its mercies that you are safe out of the fearful conflict that has been going on."

"Allah be praised!"

These were the exclamations of the affrighted girls, Olive and Lela, upon the captain and his two mids entering their apartment.

"We have much to be thankful for, and something to regret," replied the captain. "My regret is, that the rascal, Rob, has slipped his cable from the hands of justice."

"Rob—the terrible Rob, dead!" exclaimed the princess. "Wicked as it may be to rejoice at the death of any human being, I say: Allah be praised!"

"Would—oh!—would that I had to be thankful for the safety of my father!" exclaimed Olive.

"Young lady," said the captain, "you have your wish. Your father, Sir Leofric, is safe, and probably in England by this time."

"Can this be true, or are you buoying me up with false hopes?" cried Olive.

"I saw him in Jamaica, and heard the story of his escape; it was a narrow one. The pirates becoming intoxicated, failed to fire the ship ere they quitted her."

"Although the hatches were battened down, by some good fortune the female passengers succeeded in forcing their way out of the cabin, and so became the means of liberating the men. So the *De Vere*, falling in with another ship, received sufficient repairs to enable her to reach Jamaica in safety, from whence, after undergoing a refit, she was dispatched by the admiral under convoy to England."

Our story is now nearly concluded.

The captain having razed the piratical forts to the ground, returned with his prisoners and the young persons who have figured in this history on board his ship, and set sail to complete his voyage to England, calling on his way at the Island of Johanna, to return to her mother the queen—the Princess Lela.

To the delight of Lela, at her mother's court she found the Prince Achmet, who was about to set out with a fleet to punish the pirates of the island, and rescue from Rob his bride.

This meeting with the prince, and the speedy marriage, was some consolation for parting from her English friends, to whom she had become devoted.

On rejoining her father in England, the joy of Olive knew no bounds. As for the old baronet, now rich, he readily offered Olive's hand to Lionel, when he should become of sufficient age. There was one great sorrow for Lal; his mother had died a few months before reaching England. Fortunately, however, that vile alderman, Opium, had died before his wife. So Lal inherited the fortunes of both, and at twenty-three married Olive; became a member of the colonial government, and ultimately a baronet by the title of Sir Lionel Dashwood Mordaunt; for the old baronet having no male heirs, by his interest with the king, secured the reversion of the baronetcy to his son-in-law.

[THE END.]

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